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The Mystery of Bracken Hollow

BY

May Agnes Fleming

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THE
Mystery of Bracken Hollow

A Sequel to "A Wonderful Woman"

BY

MAY AGNES FLEMING

AUTHOR OF

"A Wonderful Woman," "Silent and True," "Norine's Revenge," "Carried by Storm," and many other ideal romances of American life.

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The Mystery of Bracken Hollow

SYNOPSIS OF "A WONDERFUL WOMAN."

Having come into a fortune quite unexpectedly, Sir John Dangerfield left India, where he had lived for a number of years, and returned to England to take possession of his inheritance and the estates pertaining thereto. His only daughter and heiress, Katherine, was mistress of her father's mansion of Scarswood, for his wife had died in India. Harriet Harmon, calling herself Mrs. Vavasor, came as an unwelcome guest, forcing her presence upon the baronet and his daughter. Katherine fell in love with Gaston Dantree, a handsome fortune-hunter, and became engaged to him in spite of her father's objection. She found a package of letters in her fiancé's handwriting, addressed to Marie de Lansac. When she asked Dantree who the lady was, he swore that she was nothing to him, and Katherine was satisfied. The wedding day was fixed for New Year's Eve. Sir John gave Mrs. Vavasor a check for ten thousand pounds to go away, but instead of disappearing forever, as she had promised to do, she went to his cousin, Peter Dangerfield, and told him the secret that Sir John had been so anxious to keep hidden from the world. For this service she received the promise of another large sum of money. On the night set for the wedding she called on Gaston Dantree and told him that Katherine was not Sir John's daughter, but an adopted waif, with no claim upon his fortune, which was strictly entailed to the next heir. The guests were assembled and everything waiting for the bridegroom. He arrived late, and, in a furious rage, he accused Sir John of having deceived him, and refused to marry Katherine. The angry baronet threw him over the stairs, where he lay as one dead. Doctor Otis, who was one of the guests, took him to his home, saying he was so seriously injured that he might never recover his reason. The excitement was too much for Sir John, who died that same night of heart failure. Peter Dangerfield at once took possession of the estate, and Katherine left the house, vowing vengeance on those who had wronged her. She went to the home of Doctor Otis, where Gaston Dantree was being cared for. Going to the room where he lay, bruised and bereft of his senses, she was found unconscious on the floor. The doctor pronounced her dead, and she was buried in the little country churchyard.

The Earl of Ruysland was in London with his daughter, Lady Cecil Clive. Here she met Captain O'Donnell, whom she had known six years before in Ireland, when the two had fallen in love with each other after the captain had saved her from drowning. When Lord Ruysland was asked for his daughter's hand he took her away, for he wished her to marry Sir Arthur Tregenna, who was wealthy and prominent. Peter Dangerfield was married to a widow with twin girls, and their governess was a Miss Herncastle, whose resemblance to Katherine Dangerfield had an unpleasant effect upon Sir Peter. They went to Scarswood after the London season, and among the guests were Sir Arthur Tregenna, Lord Ruysland and his daughter, and Captain Redmond O'Donnell.

THE MYSTERY OF BRACKEN HOLLOW.

CHAPTER I.

AN IRISH IDYL.

Redmond O'Donnell had said that he would not be home to see Lord Ruysland and his daughter if they should call to thank him for plunging into the swiftly rolling waters to save the life of the young girl at the risk of losing his own, but fate decreed otherwise, for when he went to the stable the following morning to saddle his favorite mare he found that she had lost a shoe, so Lanty led her off to the blacksmith, while O'Donnell returned to the house and found himself face to face with his English visitors, and from the moment that he gazed into the two large soft eyes, and heard the low voice murmuring grateful thanks, his doom was sealed. He flung open the lockless front door and led the way, with a half-laughing apology for the tumbledown state of O'Donnell Castle.

The earl and his daughter remained nearly an hour. The young seigneur of this ruined castle conducted them to the gates—nay, to the two huge buttresses where gates had once been—and stood, cap in hand, watching them depart. And so, with the sunshine on his handsome tanned face and his uncovered head, Lady Cecil bore away the image of Redmond O'Donnell.

It was love at first sight—boy-and-girl love, of course; and the Earl of Ruysland, shrewd old worldling that he was, might have known it very well if he had given the subject one thought. But he did not. He was a great deal too absorbed in his own personal concerns about this time to have much solicitude about his little daughter's *affaires du cœur*. Lady Cecil had pitied Redmond O'Donnell for being a pauper, without in the

least dreaming she was one herself. Through no fancy for the country, through no desire to ameliorate the condition of the inhabitants, had my lord come to Ireland. Grim poverty had driven him hither, and was likely to keep him here for some time to come.

His life had been one long round of pleasure and excess, of luxury and extravagance. He had come into a fortune when he attained his majority, and squandered it. He came into another when he married his wealthy wife, and squandered that, too. Now he was over head and ears in debt. Clive Court was mortgaged past all redemption—in flight was his only safety; and he fled—to Ireland. There was that little hunting-box of his among the Ulster hills—Torryglen; he could have that made habitable, and go there, and rough it until the storm blew over. Roughing it himself, he did not so much mind. "Roughing it," in his phraseology, meaning a valet to wait upon him, all the elegancies of his life transported from his Belgravian lodgings, and a first-rate cook—but there was his daughter. For the first time in her sixteen years of life she was thrown upon his hands. At her birth, and her mother's death, she had been placed out at nurse; at the age of three, a cousin of her mother's, living in Paris, had taken her, and brought her up. Brought her up on strictly French principles—taught her that love and courtship, as English girls understand them, are indelicate, criminal almost; that for the present she must attend to her books, her music, her drawing, and embroidery, and that, when the proper time came, she would receive her husband as she did her jewelry and dresses—from the hand of papa. Papa came to see her tolerably often, took her with him once in awhile when he visited his friend and crony, Sir John Tregenna; and she was told if she were a good girl she should one day, when properly grown up, marry young Arthur and be Lady Tregenna herself, and queen it in this old sea-girt Cornish castle. And little Cecil always laughed and dimpled, and danced away and thought no more about it. She had seen very little of Arthur Tregenna—she was somewhat in awe of him, as has been said. He was so grave, so wise, so learned, and she was

such a frivolous little butterfly, dancing in the sunshine, eating bonbons, and singing from morning till night.

Her first grief was the death of the kind Gallicized Englishwoman who had been her second mother. Her father, on the eve of his Irish exile, went to Paris, brought her with him, and her old bonny Thérèse, and for the first time in her life little Lady Cecil met with an adventure, and became a heroine.

"I wonder if he will call upon us?" she thought now, as she walked homeward through the soft autumn noonday—the personal pronoun, of course, having reference to the young O'Donnell. "He did not really promise, but I think—I think he looked as though he would like to come. It would be pleasant to have some one to talk to, when papa is away, and he tells me he will be away a great deal at Bally—the town with the unpronounceable Irish name. How very, very poor he seems; his jacket was quite shabby; his whole dress like that of the peasantry. And such a tumble-down place—only fit for owls, and bats, and rooks. Papa"—aloud—"you have a great deal of influence, and many friends in England—could you do nothing for this Mr. O'Donnell? He seems so dreadfully poor, papa."

The earl shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "My little, unsophisticated Cecil! A great deal of influence and many friends! My dear, I have not influence enough to keep myself out of the bankrupt court, nor friends enough to enable me to stay in England. Do you think I would come to this confounded, half-civilized land, if I could stay away? Poor, indeed! Your Mr. O'Donnell isn't half as poor as I am, for at least, I suppose, he isn't very deeply in debt."

His daughter looked at him in sheer surprise. "And you are, papa? You poor? Poor!" she tried to comprehend it, shook her head, and gave it up. "I always thought you were rich, papa—I always thought English peers had more money than they knew what to do with. How can we be poor—with servants, and horses, and plate, and——"

"One must have the necessities of life, child," her father broke in impatiently, "as long as they are living. One can't go back to primitive days, and live in a wig-

wain, or in a rickety rookery like that. I wish to Heaven one could—I'd try it. I tell you I haven't a farthing in the world—you may as well learn it now as later; and have more debts than I can ever pay off from now to the crack of doom. I don't want to pay. While I'm in hiding here I'll try to compromise in some way with my confounded creditors and the Jews. Poor, indeed! By Jove! we may live and die in this Irish exile, for what I see," the earl said, with a sort of groan.

A little smile dimpled Lady Cecil's rose-bud face, a happy light shone in her gold-brown eyes. She glanced at the little cottage nestling in its green cap, myrtle and clematis climbing over it, at the fair fields, daisy-spangled, at the glowing uplands in their purple dress, at the rugged towers of the old castle boldly outlined against the soft sunny sky, with a face that showed to her at least the prospect of an eternal Irish exile had no terrors.

"Very well, papa," she said dreamily; "suppose we do? It's a very pretty place, I'm sure, and if we are poor it surely will not take much to keep us here. While I have you and Thérèse and my books and piano, I am content to stay here forever."

Her father turned and looked at her, astonishment and disgust struggling in his face.

"Good Heaven! listen to her! Content to stay here! Yes, and live on potatoes like the natives, and convert the skins into clothing, to go barefooted and wear striped linsey-woolsey gowns reaching below the knee, talk with a mellifluous North of Ireland accent, and end by marrying Lanty Lafferty, I suppose, or the other fellow, Mickey. If you can't talk sense, Cecil, hold your tongue!"

Lady Cecil blushed and obeyed. Marry Lanty Lafferty! No, she would hardly do that. But, oh, Cecil, whence that rosy blush? Whence that droop of the fair, fresh face? Whence that sudden rising in your mind of the tall figure, the bold flashing eyes of Redmond O'Donnell? Is this why the Irish exile is robbed of its terrors for you?

"No, no," the earl said, after a little, as his daughter remained silent. "We'll get out of this howling wilder-

ness of roaring rivers, and wild young chieftains, and tumble-down castles as speedily as we can. I have one hope left, and that is"—he looked at her keenly—"in you, my dear."

"I, papa?"

"Yes; in your marriage. What's the child blushing at? In a year or two you'll be old enough, and Tregenna will be back in England. Of course, you know it has been an understood thing these many years that you were to marry him when you grew up. He is perfectly ready to fulfil the compact, and certainly you will be. You have been brought up in a way to understand this. Tregenna is rich, monstrously rich, and won't see his father-in-law up a tree. I give you my word he is my last hope—your marriage with him, I mean. I will try and compromise with my creditors, I say, and when things are straightened out a bit we'll go back to England. You shall be presented at court, and will make, I rather fancy, a sensation. We will let you enjoy yourself for your first season, and when it is over we will marry you comfortably to Sir Arthur Tregenna."

And Lady Cecil listened with drooping eyelids. It seemed to her all right—French girls married in this judicious way, all trouble of love-making and that nonsense being taken off their hands by kindly parents and guardians. She listened, and if she did not say so in words said in effect, with Thackeray's hero, Mr. Foker, "Very well, sir, as you like it. When you want me, please ring the bell," and then fell into thought once more, and wondered dreamily if young O'Donnell would call that evening at Torryglen.

Young O'Donnell called. The little drawing-room of the cottage was lit with waxlights, a peat fire burned on the hearth, a bright-hued carpet covered the floor, tinted paper hung the walls, and pretty sunny pictures gemmed them. It was half-drawing-room, half-library, one side being lined with books. A little cottage piano stood between the front windows—Lady Cecil sat at that—a writing-desk occupied the other side—his lordship sat at that. Such a contrast to the big, bare, bleak, lonesome rooms at home—their only music the scamper

of the rats, the howling of the wind, and Lanty's Irish lilting.

The contrast came upon him with a pang of almost pain; the gulf between himself and these people, whose equal by birth he was, had not seemed half so sharp before. Lady Cecil, in crisp, white muslin and blue ribbons, with diamond drops in her ears and twinkling on her slim fingers, seemed as far above him as some "bright particular star," etc. He stood in the doorway for a moment irresolute, abashed, sorry he had come, ashamed of his shabby jacket and clumping boots. The earl, with pen in his hair like some clerk, looked up from his pile of papers and nodded familiarly.

"Ah, O'Donnell—how do? Come in. Been expecting you. Very busy, you see—must excuse me. Cecil will entertain you—give him some music, my dear." And then my lord went back to his papers—bills, duns, accounts, no end—with knitted brows and absorbed mind, and forgot in half a minute such an individual as O'Donnell existed.

Redmond went over to the piano; how bright the smile of girlish pleasure with which the little lady welcomed him. "Would he sit here?—did he like music?—would he turn the pages for her?—was he fond of Moore's melodies?" In this brilliant and original way the conversation commenced.

"Yes, he liked music, and he was very fond of Moore's melodies. Would she please go on with that she was singing?" It was, "She was far from the land where her young hero sleeps," and the tender young voice was full of the pathos and sweetness of the beautiful song.

"He lived for his love, for his country he died," sang Lady Cecil, and glanced under her long, brown lashes at the grave, dark face beside her. "Robert Emmet must have looked like that," she thought; "he seems as though he could die for his country, too. I suppose his ancestors have. I wish—I wish—papa could do something for him, or—Sir Arthur Tregenna."

But, somehow, it was unpleasant to think of Sir Arthur, and her mind shifted away from him. She finished her song, and discovered Mr. O'Donnell could sing

—had a very fine and highly cultivated voice, indeed, and was used to the piano accompaniment.

"I used to sing with my sister," he explained, in answer to her involuntary look of surprise. "She plays very well."

"Your sister! why, I thought——"

"I had none. Oh, yes, I have—very jolly little girl Rose is, too—I rather think you would like her. I am quite sure," Mr. O'Donnell blushed a little himself as he turned this first compliment, "she would like you."

"And will she come here? How glad I am! Will she come soon? I am certain I shall like her."

Redmond shook his head.

"No," he said, "she will not come here at all—never, in all likelihood. She is in America—in New Orleans, living with her grandfather. A Frenchman, Lady Cecil."

"A Frenchman! Your sister's grandfather?"

"Yes—an odd mixture, you think," smiling. "You see, Lady Cecil, when my father was a young man he fought in the Mexican War under General Scott. We are a fighting race, I must inform you—war is our trade. When the Mexican War ended he went to New Orleans, and there he met a young lady—French, and a great heiress—a beauty, too, though she was my mother. Well, Lady Cecil, she fell in love with the dashing Irish trooper—her friends were frantic, and she eloped with him. A romantic story, is it not? He brought her here—it must have been a contrast to the luxury of her French home. Her father refused to forgive her—returned all her letters unopened, and here she lived seven years, and here she died and was buried. I'll show you her grave some day in the churchyard of Ballynahaggart. I was six—Rose one year old. Her father heard of her death—not through mine; he never wrote or held any communication with him—and he relented at last. Came all the way over here, nearly broken-hearted, and wanted to become reconciled. But my father sternly and bitterly refused. He offered to take Rose and me, and bring us up, and leave us his fortune when he died; but still he was refused. He returned to New Orleans, and three months after Father Ryan, of Ballynahaggart,

wrote him word of father's death. He had never held up his head after my mother's loss.

"They sent us both out there. Young as I was, I resisted—all the bitterness of my father had descended to me; but I resisted in vain. We went out to New Orleans, and now I look back upon my life there as a sort of indistinct dream or fairy-tale. The warmth, the tropical beauty, and the luxuriance of my grandfather's house, come back to me in dreams sometimes, and I wake to see the rough rafters and mildewed walls of the old castle. I stayed there with him until I was nineteen, then I refused to stay longer. He had despised my father and shortened my mother's life by his cruelty—I would not stay a dependent on his bounty. It was boyish bravado, perhaps, Lady Cecil, but I felt all I said. I left New Orleans and Rose, and came here, and here I have been running wild, and becoming the savage you find me. But I like the freedom of the life in spite of its poverty; I would not exchange it for the silken indolence and luxury of Menadarva, my Louisianian home. And here I shall remain until an opportunity offers to go, as all my kith and kin have gone before me, and earn my livelihood at the point of my sword."

Lady Cecil listened. She liked all this; she liked the lad's spirit in refusing for himself that which had been refused his mother. Not good sense, perhaps, but sound chivalry.

"You will go out to India, I suppose," she said; "there always seems to be fighting there for those who want it."

The young man's brow darkened.

"India?" he said; "no. No O'Donnell ever fought under the English flag—I will not be the first. Years ago, Lady Cecil—two hundred and more—all this country you see belonged to us, and they confiscated it, and left us houseless and outlaws. The O'Donnell of that day swore a terrible oath that none of his race should ever fight for the British invader, and none of them ever have. I shall seek service under a foreign flag—it doesn't matter which, so that it is not that of your nation, Lady Cecil."

Lady Cecil pouted—said it was unchristian and unforgiving, but in her heart of hearts she liked it all, and

wished, with Desdemona, that Heaven had made her such a man. Redmond O'Donnell lingered until the earl yawned audibly over his musty accounts, and the little ormolu clock ticked off half-past ten, and walked homeward under the moonlight and starlight, feeling that the world had suddenly beautified, and this lowly valley had become a very garden of Eden, with the sweetest Eve that ever smiled among the roses.

That first evening was but the beginning of the end. The visits, the music, the duets, reading—the walks "o'er the moor among the heather," the rides over the autumn hills, with Redmond O'Donnell for cavalier, the sketching of the old castle—the old, old, old endless story of youth and love, told since the world began—to be told till the last trump shall sound.

Lord Ruysland saw nothing, heard nothing—was as unsuspicious as though he were not a "battered London rake" and a thorough man of the world. His impecunious state filled his mind to the exclusion of everything else, and then Cecil had been so well brought up, etc. The child must walk and ride, and must have a companion. Young O'Donnell was a beggar—literally a beggar—and, of course, might as well fix his foolish affections on one of her majesty's daughters as upon that of the Earl of Ruysland.

He was awakened suddenly and unexpectedly from his dream and his delusion. Seven weeks had passed—the ides of November had come—the chill autumn blasts were whistling drearily over the mountains. He was sick and tired to death of his enforced exile; affairs had been patched up in some way, a compromise effected; he might venture to show his face once more across the Channel. In a week or two at the farthest he would start.

He sat complacently thinking this over alone in the drawing-room, when the door opened. Gregory, his man, announced "Mr. O'Donnell," and vanished.

"Ah, Redmond, my lad, glad to see you. Come in—come in. Cecil's up-stairs. I'll send for her."

But Mr. O'Donnell interrupted; he did not wish Lady Cecil sent for—at least, just yet. He wished to speak to the earl alone.

He was so embarrassed, so unlike himself—cold, frank, free, as he habitually was—that Lord Ruysland looked at him in surprise. That look was enough—it told him all.

"Good heavens!" he thought, "what an ass I have been! Of course, he has fallen in love with her—aren't matrimony and murder the national pastimes of this delightful island? And very likely she has fallen in love with him—the young savage is so confoundedly good-looking."

He was right. While he sat thinking this, Redmond O'Donnell was pouring into his ear the story of his love and his hopes.

"It was his madness to worship her"—he was very young and inclined to hyperbole—"to adore her. He was poor, he knew, but he was young, and the world was all before him. He would wait—aye, as long as his lordship pleased—he would win a name, a fortune, a title, it might be, and lay them at her feet. One O'Donnell had done it in Spain already—what any man had done he could do. His birth, at least, was equal to hers. He asked nothing now but this: Only let him hope—let him go forth into the world and win name and fame, lay them at her feet, and claim her as his wife. He loved her—no one in this world would ever love her again better than he." And then he broke down all at once and turned away and waited for his answer.

The earl kept a grave face—it spoke volumes for his admirable training and high good breeding. He did not laugh in this wild young enthusiast's face; he did not fly into a passion; he did nothing rude or unpleasant, and he did not make a scene.

"Mr. O'Donnell's affection did his daughter much honor," he said; "certainly he was her equal, her superior, indeed, in point of birth; and as to making a name for himself, and winning a fortune, of course, there could not be a doubt as to that with a young man of his indomitable courage and determination. But was it possible Lady Cecil had not already told him she was engaged?"

"Engaged!" The young man could but just gasp the word, pale and wild. "Engaged?"

"most certainly—from her very childhood—to the wealthy Cornish baronet, Sir Arthur Tregenna. She had given her promise to marry him of her own free will—the wedding, in all probability, would take place upon her eighteenth birthday. Really, now, it was quite inexcusable of Queenie not to have mentioned this. But it was just possible—she was so very young, and Mr. O'Donnell was a man of honor—perhaps he was doing him injustice in thinking he had made a declaration to her in person?"

"No." Young O'Donnell had not. He was so white, so wild, so despairing-looking, that the earl was getting alarmed. A scene! and, oh, how he abhorred scenes! "He had not spoken to her on the subject—he never had—he wished to obtain her father's consent first."

The earl grasped his hand with effusion.

"My lad, you're a gentleman from head to foot. I am proud of you! Have you—has she—I mean do you think your affection is returned? Oh! don't blush and look modest—it isn't the most unlikely thing on earth. Do you think Cecil returns your very—ah! 'pon my life! —ardent devotion?"

Young O'Donnell stood looking handsome and modest before him.

"He did not like to say—but he hoped."

"Oh, of course you do," the earl supplemented, "and very strongly, too. Well, my lad, you deserve something for the admirable and honorable manner in which you have acted, and you shall have your reward. Cecil shall wait for you if she wishes it! No, don't thank me yet; hear me out. You are to spend this evening here, are you not? Well, as you have been silent so long, be silent yet a little longer. Don't say a word to her. To-morrow morning I will lay all this before her myself, and if she prefers the penniless Irishman to the rich Cornishman, why, Heaven forbid I should force her affections! I can trust to you implicitly, I know, and this time to-morrow come over to see us again, and you shall have your answer."

He would not listen to the young man's ardent thanks; he pushed him good-naturedly away and arose.

"Thank me to-morrow," he said, "if Queenie prefers love in a cottage to thirty thousand a year—not before."

The sneer in his voice was imperceptible, but it was there. Half an hour after the earl sought out Gregory, his valet and manager.

"We leave at daybreak to-morrow morning, Gregory," he said; "Lady Cecil and I. You will remain behind, pack up everything, and follow later in the day. Not a word, however, to Lady Cecil."

That evening—the last—when Redmond O'Donnell's hair is gray, I fancy it will stand out distinct from all other evenings in his life. The wax-lit drawing-room, with its gay green carpet, its sparkling fire, its pictures, its wild natural flowers, its books, its piano. Lord Ruysland, with a paper in his hand, seated in his easy chair and watching the young people covertly from over it; Lady Cecil at the piano, the candle-light streaming over her fair blond face, her floating golden hair, her silvery silk dress, her rings, and ribbons. In dreary bivouacs, in the silence and depth of African midnight, this picture came back as vividly as he saw it then. In desolate desert marches, in the fierce, hot din of battle, it flashed upon him. Lying delirious in the fever of gunshot wounds, in Algerian hospitals, it was of this night, of her as he saw her then, he raved.

She sang for him all the songs he liked best. He leaned over the piano, his eyes on that fairest face, his ears drinking in that dearest melody, silent, happy. They rarely found much to say to one another when papa was present; they had got past the talking stage, and one word and two or three looks did the business now. There was music, and silence, and bliss; and at ten o'clock it was all over, and time for him to go.

The last night! She gave him her hand shyly and wistfully at parting, and went up to her room. The earl gave him a friendly clasp.

"To-morrow," he said, with a smile, "until to-morrow, Redmond, my lad, good night and au revoir."

The November wind was howling wildly through the moonlight-flooded earth and sky. He did not see this cold splendor; he saw nothing, thought of nothing now but lovely Cecil Clive.

What a night that was—what a long, tossing night of joy, of hope, of fear, of longing. He did not despair—he was young and sanguine, and hope had the best of it. He knew she loved him; had not looks, smiles, and blushes, a thousand and one things pen and ink can never tell, assured him of it? and what to an angelic being like that was the dross of wealth, that it should stand between two devoted hearts? Thirty thousand a year—the Cornishman had that—how he hated that Cornishman! Well, thirty thousand per annum is a good round sum, but there was wealth in the world for the seeking, and the labors of Hercules were as nothing compared to what he was ready to undergo for her sake. An O'Donnell had made his mark in Spain—McMahon in France—a Wellington in England—all Irishmen good and true; what they had done he would do. Yes, the Cornishman and his fortune might go *au diable*. She would be true to her love and to him; she would trust him and wait.

Next morning, lest he should be tempted to break his promise, and his feet, in spite of him, take him to the cottage, he mounted Kathleen and went galloping over the hills and far away with the first peep of sunrise. The afternoon was far advanced when he returned; the last slanting rays of the autumn sunset were streaming ruby and orange over the smiling moors as he knocked at the cottage door.

It was opened by grave, gentlemanly Mr. Gregory. Mr. Gregory in hat and greatcoat, and everywhere litter, and dust, and confusion. Carpets taken up, pictures taken down, packing-cases everywhere—an exodus, evidently.

He turned pale with sudden terror. What did it mean? Where was she? His heart was throbbing so fast, it seemed to stop his very breath.

"Where is Lord Ruysland?" He turned almost savagely upon Gregory, with pale face and excited eyes, but all the wild Irishmen from Derry to Connaught were not going to upset the equanimity of a well-trained English valet.

"Gone, Mr. Redmond, sir—a sudding summons, I believe it was. His lordship left about nine o'clock this morning, sir—Lady Cecil, halso. Which there is a note

for you, Mr. Redmond, sir, which no doubt hexplains. Wait one moment, hif you please, and I'll fetch it."

He never spoke a word. He leaned against the door-post, feeling sick and giddy, all things seeming in a mist. Mr. Gregory returned, the note in his hand, a look of mingled amusement and pity struggling with the national and professional gravity of a Briton and a valet. Did he suspect the truth? Most likely—servants know everything. He placed it in his hand; the young man went forward a pace or two, and the white door shut very quietly and decidedly behind him. He tore it open; it contained an enclosure. The earl had very little to say—half a dozen lines held Redmond O'Donnell's sentence of doom:

"My Dear Boy: I spoke to Cecil after you left. It is as I feared—you have deceived yourself. Her promise binds her; she has no wish nor inclination to break it. And she had no idea of the state of your feelings. She joins with me in thinking it best for all parties she should go at once—another meeting could be but embarrassing to both. With real regrets, and best wishes for your future, I am, my dear boy, sincerely yours,

"Ruysland."

The enclosed was in the slim, Italian tracery of Lady Cecil—strangely cold and heartless words:

"*Mon Ami:* I am inexpressibly distressed. Papa has told me all. What he said to you is true. My promise is given and must be kept. It is best that I should go. Farewell! My eternal gratitude and friendship are yours. Cecil."

Only that—so cold, so hollow, so heartless, so false! The golden sunshine, the green lime-trees, the violet heath turned black for an instant before his eyes. Then he crumpled the letters in his hand and walked away.

Mr. Gregory was watching from the window. Mr. Gregory saw him stagger like a drunken man as he walked, and, some twenty yards from the cottage, fling himself downward on the waving heath, and lie there like a stone. Mr. Gregory's masculine sympathies were touched.

"Poor young chap!" he soliloquized. "Master's been and given him the slip. He's fell in love with her ladyship, and this 'ere's the hupshot. Sarves him right, of coorse—poor as a church mouse—still, he's a nice young fellar, and I quite pities him. I remember 'ow I felt myself when 'Arriet Lelachur long ago jilted me."

He lay there for hours. The sun had set, the night, with its stars and winds, had come, when he lifted his head off his arm, and Mr. Gregory and the packing-cases were miles away. His haggard eyes fell on the notes he still held, and with a fierce imprecation he tore them into atoms and scattered them far and wide.

"And so shall I tear her—false, heartless, mocking jilt—out of my life. Oh, God! to think that every smile, every word, every look was mockery and deceit—that she was fooling me from the first, and laughing at my presumptuous folly, while I thought her an angel. And he—while I live I'll never trust man or woman again!"

Are we not all unconsciously theatrical in the supreme hours of our lives? He was now, although there was a heart-sob in every word. And with them the boy's heart went out from Redmond O'Donnell, and never came back again.

CHAPTER II.

ITS ENGLISH READING.

Lady Cecil then was heartless—you say, a flirt, a deceitful flirt, from first to last—luring with innocent eyes and soft, childish smile, even at sixteen, only to fling her victim away the moment her conquest was made. Wait.

She had bidden Redmond good night. There was a tender, tremulous happiness in the soft hazel eyes that watched him out of sight, a faint half-smile on the rosy, parted lips. She scarcely knew what her new sky-bliss meant; she never thought of falling in love—was she not to marry Sir Arthur Tregenna?—only, she knew, she had never, never been half so happy before in all her life, and that Ireland was fairer and lovelier than the "Islands of the Blessed" themselves.

"Good night, papa," she said, taking her candle and turning to go.

"Oh!—wait a moment, Queenie, will you?" her father said, somewhat hurriedly; "I want you to do a little copying for me before you go to bed."

"Copying?" She set down her candle and looked at him in wonder. He did not choose to meet those large, surprised brown eyes.

"Yes, my dear. Don't look alarmed; only a line or two. Here it is. Copy it off, word for word, as I dictate.

"Write *'Mon Ami.'*"

She wrote it.

"I am inexpressibly distressed. Papa has told me all. What he has said to you is true. My promise is given and must be kept. It is best that I should go." Here Lady Cecil came to a sudden, alarmed stop, and looked up with a greatly disturbed face. "Go, papa," she said; "what does all this mean?"

"Be kind enough to write on, and never mind asking questions," her father retorted impatiently; "'best that I should go.' You have that? Go on, then. 'Farewell! My eternal gratitude and friendship are yours.' Now sign it 'Cecil.' That will do. Thanks, my dear. What a very pretty hand you write, by the way."

"Papa," his daughter began, still with that disturbed face, "whom is this written for? What does it mean? I don't understand."

"Don't you? Please don't ask too many questions—curiosity has ever been the bane of your sex. Remember Eve and Lot's wife, and be warned. Perhaps I want your autograph. Apropos of nothing," he was very busily folding the note now. "Thérèse will wake you early to-morrow morning. We start immediately after breakfast for Enniskillen."

"Enniskillen!" She said it with a sort of gasp. "Papa, are we—going away?"

He laid down the letter, and looked her full, keenly, steadily in the face. Her eyes shifted and fell under that pitiless scrutiny.

"And if we are, Queenie—what then? If I had said we were going to the antipodes, you would hardly look

more aghast. Your attachment to—ah, Torryglen, of course—must be very strong, my dear, since the thought of leaving it affects you thus."

She shrank away from his sneer as though he had struck her. Her sensitive lips quivered, her face flushed. Again she took her candle and turned to go.

"Good night, papa." Her voice sounded husky, and the earl watched the slight, fragile figure ascending the stairs, with compressed lips and knitted brows.

"Not one second too soon," he thought. "Another week and the mischief would have been irrevocably done. Given a lonely country house, and two moderately well-looking people, thrown constantly into propinquity, a love-affair invariably follows. My young friend O'Donnell, I thank you for speaking in the nick of time. You have a pride that bears no proportion to your purse or prospects, and I think those two polite little notes will effectually wind up your business."

Lady Cecil slept very little that night—a panic had seized her. Going away! did he know? would she see him to say good-by before she left? would they ever meet again? And that note—what did that cold, formal note mean? Whom was it for? Her cheeks were quite white, her eyes heavy, her step slow, her tones languid, when she descended to breakfast. She was already in her riding-habit, and the horses were saddled and waiting. During breakfast her eyes kept turning to the door and windows—up the valley road leading to the O'Donnell's ruined keep. Would he come? The earl saw and smiled grimly to himself.

"No, my dear," he said inwardly. "You strain your pretty brown eyes for nothing—he will not come. A handsome lad and a brave, but you have looked your last upon him."

They arose from breakfast—the hour of departure had come. Then out of sheer desperation Lady Cecil gathered courage and spoke with a great gulp:

"Papa—does—does Mr. O'Donnell know we——" She stopped, unable to finish the sentence.

"Mr. O'Donnell," with bland urbanity, "well, I'm not quite positive whether I mentioned to him yesterday our departure or not. I shall leave him a note, however, on

thanks and farewell. Of course, it wasn't necessary to tell him, my dear—a very fine fellow, indeed, in his sphere, and much superior to the rest of the peasantry—a little presumptuous, though, I fancy, of late. Come, Cecil—the horses wait, and 'time is on the wing.'"

What could she say?—what could she do? There was passionate rebellion at her heart—pain, love, regret, remorse. Oh, what would he think? how basely ungrateful she would appear in his eyes. How unkind—how cruel of papa, not to have spoken last night before he left, and let them say good-by, at least. She could hardly see the familiar landscape for the passionate tears that filled her eyes. Here was the river—only a placid stream now, where he had so heroically risked his life to save hers, yonder the steep, black cliff up which he had scrambled, at the risk of his neck, to gather a cluster of holly she had longed for. There were the grim, rugged, lonely towers and buttresses of the once grand old Irish castle, there the spot where she had sat by his side hundreds of times sketching the ruins. And now they were parting without one word of farewell—parting forever!

They rode on; the tower was reached. All the way she had scarcely spoken one word—all the way she had been watching, watching vainly for him. They dined at Ballynahaggart, and started in the afternoon for Enniskillen. They made no stay—only that one night; in two days they were in London.

They remained a week in the metropolis, at the residence of a friend. The earl returning home to dinner one evening, sought out his daughter, with an interesting item of news. In Regent Street that day he had come suddenly upon whom did she think?—their young Irish friend, Redmond O'Donnell.

She had been sitting at the window looking out at the twilit street. At the sound of that name she turned suddenly. How wan and thin she had grown in a week—how dull the bright brown eye! Now a sudden light leaped into them—a swift, hot flush of joy swept over her face.

"Papa! Redmond! You saw him!"

"Yes, my dear," Lord Ruysland said carelessly, "and looking very well, too. I asked him to come here—said

you would be glad to see him—very sorry at having to leave Ireland without an opportunity of saying good-by, and all that—but he declined."

"He—declined!" The pale lips could but just shape the words.

"Yes, and rather discourteously, too. Said he did not mean to stay in London over a week, and that his time would be fully occupied. He did not even send you a message; he seemed filled with boyish elation over his own affairs. He is going out to Algiers, he tells me, to seek active service under the French flag. These hot-headed Irishmen are always 'spoiling for a fight.' He seemed in great spirits, and quite wild to be off. But he might have found time to call, though, all the same, I think, or even send you a message. It's 'out of sight, out of mind,' with these hare-brained sort of people, though, always. Go to the dickens to do any one a service, and forget them for good the instant they are out of their sight."

Dead silence answered him. He tried to see his daughter's face, but it was averted, and the gathering twilight hid it. He need not have feared. She had all an English girl's "pluck." Her eyes were flashing now, one little hand clenched hard, her teeth set. She had liked him so much—so much, she had not known one happy hour since they had left Ulster, for thinking of him; and now he was in London, and refused to come to see her—talked to her father, and would not even send his remembrances—on the eve of departure forever, it might be, and could find no time to call and say good-by. She had thought of him by day and dreamed of him by night, and he returned it—like this!

"I'll never think of him again—never!" she said, under her breath. "I am glad, glad, glad he does not dream how much I—I like him!"—a great sob here. "I'll never think of him again, if I can."

If she could! One thing is certain, she never uttered his name from that hour, and slowly the sparkle came back to her eyes, the old joyous ring to her laugh, and *La Reine Blanche* was her own bright, glad self once more. "Love's young dream" had come and gone, had been born, and died a natural death, and was decently

buried out of sight. But this, also, is certain—no second dream ever came to replace it. Good men and true bowed down and fell before Lord Ruysland's handsome, dark-eyed daughter; names, titles, hearts, fortunes, and coronets were laid at her feet, to be rejected. The world could not understand. What did she mean? What did she expect? She felt a sort of weary wonder, herself. Why could she not return any of this love so freely lavished upon her? Men had asked her to be their wife whose affection and name would have done honor to any woman, but she rejected them all. Many of them touched her pity and her pride—not one her heart. Her father looked on patiently, quite resigned. None of these admirers were richer than his favorite, Sir Arthur Tregenna. Sir Arthur Tregenna, when the time came, she should marry.

In all these years of conquest, and triumph, and pleasure she had heard nothing of or from her Irish hero. Long before, perhaps, his grave might have been made out yonder under the burning Arab sky; dead or alive, at least he was lost forever to her. She could even smile now as she looked back upon that pretty, poetic, foolish idyl of her first youth—smile to think what a hero he had been in her eyes—how willingly she would have given "all for love, and thought the world well lost"—smile to think what simpletons love-sick girls of sixteen are.

And now six years were past, and he stood before her. Stood before her changed greatly, and yet the same. It was a superbly soldierly figure—tall, stalwart, erect, strong, but not stout—muscular, yet graceful. The fresh, beardless face of the boy she remembered she saw no longer; the face of the man was darkly bronzed by the burning Algerian sun; a most becoming, most desirable auburn beard and mustache altered the whole expression of the lower part. It had a stern, something of a tired look, the lips a cynical curve, the blue eyes a keen, hard light, very different from their old honest simplicity and frankness. No; this bronzed, bearded, Algerian chasseur was not the Redmond O'Donnell she

had known and liked so well, any more than she was the blushing, tender heart of six years ago.

She stood for an instant looking at him. The surprise of seeing him here, as suddenly as though he had risen up out of the earth, almost took her breath away. But for the Lady Cecil Clive to lose her self-possession long was not possible. A second later, and she held out her hand to him with a smile and glance as bright, as frank, as pleasant as any that had ever been given him by the Lady Cecil, of Torryglen.

"It is—it is Captain O'Donnell. And after all those years! And so changed by time, and whiskers, and Algerian campaigning, that I may well be pardoned for doubting his identity."

He bowed with a smile over the little hand a brief instant, then resigned it.

"Changed, no doubt—and not for the better; grown old, and gray, and grim. And you, too, have changed, Lady Cecil—it might seem like flattery if I told you how greatly. And yet I think I should have known you anywhere."

"Queenie has grown tall, and doesn't blush quite so often as she used at Torryglen," her father interposed. "You have had many hairbreadth escapes by flood and field since we saw you last, but I don't think you ever had a narrower one than that evening when we saw you first. Oh, well—perhaps excepting yesterday at the picnic."

Captain O'Donnell laughed—the old, pleasant, mellow laugh of long ago—and showed very white teeth behind his big trooper's mustache.

"Yes, the risk was imminent yesterday; my nerves have hardly yet recovered the shock of that—tempest in a teapot. I am glad to find the lady I rescued so heroically from that twopenny-halfpenny squall is none the worse for her wetting."

"Here she comes to answer for herself," returned the earl, as his niece came sailing up on the arm of Major Frankland.

"Major Frankland, behold the preserver of your life from the hurricane yesterday. Lady Dangerfield has

already thanked him. Major Frankland, my friend Captain O'Donnell."

Major Frankland bowed, but he also frowned and pulled his whisker. Why need the fellow be so confoundedly good-looking, and why need women make such a howling over a trifle? He hadn't even risked a wet jacket for Lady Dangerfield—he had risked nothing, in fact; and here she was for the second time pouring forth her gratitude with an effusion and volubility sickening to hear. Captain O'Donnell bore it all like the hero he was, and stood with his "blushing honors thick upon him" perfectly cool, perfectly easy, perfectly self-possessed.

"So you were the knight to the rescue, Captain O'Donnell?" Lady Cecil said, with a laugh that had a shadow of her father's sarcasm in it. "I might have known it if I had known you were in the neighborhood at all. You have an amiable mania for saving people's lives. It reminds me of declining a verb. First person singular, he saves my life, second person singular he saves your life, third person singular he saves his life—meaning Sir Arthur over yonder. Really, if the tournament and tilting days were not over you might ride forth a veritable knight errant with visor closed, and corselet clasped, and lance in rest, to the rescue of fair maidens and noble dames in danger. But all this while, papa, you do not tell us what good fortune has sent Captain O'Donnell to Sussex, of all places in the world."

"And why not to Sussex, Lady Cecil? One could hardly select a fairer county to ruralize in. However, the choice on this occasion was not mine, but my sister's. She wished to come—why, Heaven knows—I never presume to ask the reason of a lady's whim. She wished to come to Sussex, to Castleford, and—here we are."

"Your sister?" Lady Cecil said, interested. "Yes, Mr. Wyatt told me in town she was with you; in ill health, too, I am almost afraid he said."

"In very ill health," the chasseur answered gravely; "and I can set her anxiety to visit this place down to nothing but an invalid's meaningless whim. My great hope is that its gratification may do her good."

"Your sister here, and sick, Captain O'Donnell?" Lady

Dangerfield cut in, "and we not know it? Abominable! Where are you staying?"

"In very pleasant quarters," with a smile at her *brusquerie;* "at the Silver Rose."

"Very pleasant for an Algerian soldier, perhaps—not so pleasant for an invalid lady. Your sister comes here, Captain O'Donnell—oh, I insist upon it—and shall make Scarswood her home during her stay. You, too—Sir Peter and I will be most happy; indeed, we shall take no excuse."

But Captain O'Donnell only listened and smiled that inexorable smile of his.

"Thanks very much; you are most kind; but, of course, it is quite impossible."

"No one ever says impossible to me, sir," cries my lady imperially. "Miss O'Donnell—is she Miss O'Donnell, by the bye? She is. Very well, then, Lady Cecil and I will call upon Miss O'Donnell to-morrow at the Silver Rose, and fetch her back with us here—that's decided."

"Gad! my dear," interrupted Lord Ruysland, "if you can prevail upon O'Donnell to say yes when O'Donnell has made up his mind to say no, then you are a greater diplomat than I ever gave you credit for. 'Pon my life, you should have seen and heard the trouble I had to induce him to honor Scarswood with his presence even for a few moments to-night. Said it wasn't worth while, you know—intended to leave in a week or so—didn't want to put in an appearance at all, by George! even to see you again, Queenie, one of his oldest friends."

"It is characteristic of Captain O'Donnell to treat his friends with profound disregard. Not overflattering to us, is it, Ginevra? By the way, though, I should have thought you would have liked to see Sir Arthur Tregenna again, at least. He certainly would have put himself to considerable inconvenience for the pleasure of meeting you."

"What!" O'Donnell said, his eyes lighting with real pleasure. "Tregenna here! You are right, Lady Cecil; I shall be glad to meet him again—the best fellow—— Ah! I see him—very pleasantly occupied he appears to be, too."

"Flirting with the governess," put in the earl, stroking his iron-gray mustache. "Miss Herncastle must have something to say for herself, then, after all; she has succeeded in amusing Tregenna longer and better than I ever saw him before since he came here. How is it she comes to be among us to-night, Ginevra? Her first appearance, is it not?—and very unlike your usual tactics."

"Queenie would have it," Lady Dangerfield answered, with a shrug; "she persists in making the governess one of the family."

"Oh, Queenie would have it, would she?" the earl responded, thoughtfully looking at his daughter. "Very considerate of Queenie, and she likes to have the baronet amused—naturally. Captain O'Donnell, you honor Miss Herncastle with a very prolonged and inquisitive gaze—may I ask if you have fallen a victim as well as Sir Arthur?"

"A victim? Well, no, I think not. I am trying to recollect where I have seen Miss Herncastle before."

"What!" cried Lady Dangerfield; "you, too? Oh, this is too much. First Lord Ruysland, then Sir Peter Dangerfield, now Captain O'Donnell, all are transfixed at sight of my nursery governess, and insist that, dead or alive, they have met her before. Now, where was it you knew her, *Mon Capitaine*—surely not in Algiers?"

"Not in Algiers, certainly. Where I have seen her before, I cannot tell; seen her I have, that is positive—my memory for facts and faces may be trusted. And hers is not a face to be seen and forgotten, yet just now I cannot place it."

"Our waltz, I believe, Lady Cecil!" exclaimed a gentleman, coming up and salaaming before her. It was Squire Talbot, of Morecambe; and Lady Cecil, with a few last smiling words over her white shoulder to the chasseur, took his proffered arm and moved away.

"How strange," she was thinking, "that Captain O'Donnell should have known her, too. Really, Miss Herncastle is a most mysterious personage. Why is it, I wonder, that she attracts and fascinates me so? It isn't that I like her—I don't; I doubt, I distrust her. Yet I like to look at her, to hear her talk, to wonder about her. How rapt Sir Arthur looks! I never succeeded in

enchaining him like that. Four hours ago he was on the brink of asking me to be his wife—now he looks as though there were not another woman in the scheme of the universe than Helen Herncastle. Am I jealous, I wonder?—do I really want to marry him, after all? Am I the coquette they call me?"

She smiled bitterly as she looked toward them. Squire Talbot caught that look and followed it.

"Eh! Quite a flirtation going on there, certainly." He was rather obtuse—the squire. "Didn't think Sir Arthur was much of a lady's man, but, gad! to-night he seems—— Oh, good Heaven!"

He stopped short—he stared aghast. Miss Herncastle had lifted her stately head from the book of engravings and turned her face full toward them. And for the first time Squire Talbot saw her.

Lady Cecil looked at him and laughed outright. Amaze, consternation, horror, were actually pictured upon his face.

"What! another? Upon my word the plot thickens rapidly. You, too, have known Miss Herncastle, then, in some other and better world? Is she destined to strike every gentleman she meets in this sensational manner?"

"Miss—what did you call her, Lady Cecil? Good God! I never saw such a resemblance. Upon my sacred honor, Lady Cecil, I thought it was a ghost!"

"Of course—that's the formula—they all say that. Whose ghost do you take her for, Squire Talbot?"

"Katherine Dangerfield, of course—poor Kathie! It is—good God!—it is as like her as——" The squire pulled out his cambric and wiped his flushed and excited face. "I give you my word, I never saw such a resemblance. Except that this lady has darker hair, and, yes—yes, I think—and is taller and more womanly—she is——" Again the squire paused, his consternation only permitting disconnected sentences. "I never saw anything like it—never, I give you my honor. What does Sir Peter say? He must have noticed it, and, gad! it can't be pleasant for him."

"Sir Peter has been in a collapsed and horrified state ever since she entered Scarswood. Oh, yes! he sees it—not a doubt of that. Miss Herncastle is like one of

Wilkie Collins' novels—the interest intensifies steadily to the end—the 'Man in the Iron Mask' was plain reading compared to her. Really, if she keeps frightening people in this way, I greatly fear Lady Dangerfield must send her away. A living ghost can't be a pleasant instructress of youth."

"She does not seem to frighten Sir Arthur Tregenna, at least," said Squire Talbot, beginning to recover from his sudden shock. "And so she is only the governess. I never saw such a resemblance—never in all my life. What would Edith say, I wonder, if she could see it?"

"Edith?"

"My sister, you know—used to be Katherine Dangerfield's bosom friend and confidante—married now, you know—De Vere, of the Plungers—and gone to south of France for her health. Gad! I don't think it would be safe to let them meet—she's nervous, Edith is—took Katherine's death, poor girl, very deeply to heart; and if she came suddenly upon this—this facsimile, by George! of her friend, I wouldn't answer for the consequences. Never saw such a striking resemblance in all my life."

And then they whirled away in their waltz. How strange! how strange! Lady Cecil kept thinking. Perhaps that was why her eyes rarely wandered from these two at the table. No one interrupted them. It was a most pronounced flirtation. Even Captain O'Donnell declined the request of his hostess and the earl that he should go up and speak to his friend."

"By no means," he said, with a smile; "that can wait. It would be a pity to interrupt him—he seems so well amused."

It was Miss Herncastle herself who broke up the tête-à-tête. Sir Arthur had become so interested, so absorbed in his companion and the pictures, as to quite forget the flight of time. Women never forget the proprieties, *les convenances,* in any situation of life. She arose, Lady Cecil still watching her with a curiously set and interested expression, spoke a few last half-smiling words, and hurried away. Like a man awakening from a dream, she saw Sir Arthur rise. No, Lady Cecil, you never succeeded in holding him spellbound in this way, with all your beauty, all your brilliance. Then, from an inner

room, she saw the tall chasseur make his way through the crowd, and approach. She could even hear his deep mellow tones, "Tregenna, my dear fellow, how goes it?" Then with a look of real pleasure lighting up his grave face, she saw the Cornish baronet clasp the hand of the Irish soldier of fortune. Was there anything in the sight of the cordial hand-clasp of those two men unpleasant to the sight of Lady Cecil Clive? Over the fair face an irritated flush came, into the brown, bright eyes a sudden, swift, dark anger passed. She turned away from the sight to her next partner, and for the rest of the night danced and flirted without intermission. Her laugh was gayer, her eyes brighter, her cheeks rosier than any there had ever seen them before. Bright at all times, some touch of feverish impatience and anger within made her positively dazzling to-night.

The "festive hours" drew to a close; the guests were fast departing. The music was pealing forth its last gay strains, as for the first moment she found herself alone. No touch of fatigue dimmed the radiance of that perfect face; that starry light gave her eyes the gleam of dark diamonds; the fever rose-tint was deeper than ever on her cheek, when looking up she saw approaching Lady Dangerfield on the arm of Captain O'Donnell—Sir Arthur, stately and dignified, on her other hand. Her brilliant ladyship was vivaciously insisting upon something, the chasseur laughingly but resolutely refusing.

"Oh, here you are, Queenie!" her ladyship impatiently cried. "What an inveterate dancer you are becoming! It was fatiguing only to watch you to-night. Perhaps you will succeed where I fail. You and Captain O'Donnell appear to be old friends; try if you can prevail upon him and overcome his obstinacy."

"To overcome the obstinacy of Captain O'Donnell I know of old to be an impossible task. But to please you, Ginerva! On what particular point is our Chasseur d'Afrique obstinate now?"

"I want him to leave the inn at Castleford, with his sister, and come here. The idea of stopping at an inn—a lady, too—preposterous! Sir Peter insists, I insist, Uncle Raoul insists, Sir Arthur insists—all in vain. And I used to think Irishmen the most gallant and yielding

of men—could not possibly say no to a lady if they tried. I shall have another opinion of Captain O'Donnell's countrymen after to-night."

"You will come," *La Reine Blanche* said, with a glance of her long, luminous eyes, that had done fatal service ere to-night. Few men had ever the moral courage to say no to those bewitching eyes. "You will. Our motto is 'The More the Merrier.' We will do our best not to bore you. Scarswood is a pleasanter place than the Silver Rose. You will come—I wish it."

"And nobody ever says no to Queenie," Lady Dangerfield gaily added; "her rule is absolute monarchy."

He looked down into the beautiful, laughing, imperial face, and bent low before her, with all the gallantry of an Irishman, all the debonair of a Frenchman.

"I can believe it, Lady Dangerfield. And that *La Reine Blanche* may have the pleasure of a new sensation, permit me to say it—for once. To please Lady Cecil—what is there mortal man would not do? In this trivial matter she will, however, let me have my own obstinate way. If the Peri had never dwelt in paradise, she would not have wept in leaving. I may be weak, but past sad experience has taught me wisdom. I take warning by the fate of the Peri."

His tone was very gentle, his smile very pleasant, but his will was invincible. The velvet glove sheathed a hand of iron; this was not the Redmond O'Donnell she had known—the impetuous, yielding lad, to whom she had but to say "come," and he came—"go," and he went. Was she testing her own power? If so, she failed signally. As he turned to go to the cloak-room she heard him humming a tune under his breath, a queer, provoking half-smile on his face. She caught the fag-end of the words:

> "For the bird that is once in the toils, my dear,
> Can never be caught with chaff."

That half-amused, half-knowing smile was still on his mustached lips as he bade her a gay good night, and was gone. The Irish idyl had been written, and this was its English reading.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY OF BRACKEN HOLLOW.

The small parlor of the Silver Rose looked very much to-day as it had done this day six years, when little Mrs. Vavasor had been its occupant. A trifle dustier and rustier, darker and dingier, but the same; and in one of its venerable, home-made armchairs, under its open front windows, sat another little lady, looking with weary eyes up and down the street. It was Rose O'Donnell—the captain's sister. She was a little creature, as petite as Mrs. Vavasor herself, of fairylike, fragile proportions, a wan, moonlight sort of face, lit with large, melancholy eyes. Those somber, blue eyes, under their black brows and lashes, reminded you of her brother; the rich, abundant brown hair, that was but a warmer shade of black, was also his; otherwise, there was no resemblance. In repose the expression of that wan, small face was one of settled sadness; at intervals, though, it lit up into a smile of wonderful brightness and sweetness, and then she was more like her brother than ever. She wore gray silk, without ribbon, or lace, or jewel, and she looked like a little Quakeress, or a small, gray kitten, coiled up there in her big chair. She was quite alone, her delicate brow knit in deep and painful thought, her hands clasping and unclasping nervously in her lap, her great eyes fixed on the passers-by, but evidently not seeing them.

"This is the place," she said to herself, in a sort of whisper; "this is the town, and Scarswood was the house. At last—at last! But how will it end? Must I go on to my grave knowing nothing—nothing—whether he be living or dead, or am I to find out here? If I only dared tell Redmond—my best brother, my dearest friend—but I dare not. If he be alive, and they met, he would surely kill him."

An inner door opened, and her brother, a straw sombrero in one hand, a fishing-rod in the other, came in with his sounding trooper tread.

"Rose," he said hurriedly, "I did not mention it at

breakfast, but I was absent last night. I met an old acquaintance, and he insisted upon taking me with him. I spent the evening at Scarswood Park."

"Scarswood Park!" It was almost a startled cry, but he did not notice it.

"Yes, Scarswood Park—place some three or four miles off—belonging to Sir Peter Dangerfield. Didn't see Sir Peter—saw my lady, though, and—here is where the interest comes in. She insists upon your leaving this hostelry and becoming her guest."

"I?"

"Yes. I chanced to do her some trifling service the other day—absurdly trifling to make such a fuss over—and she insists upon magnifying a mole-hill into a mountain, saying I saved her life and all that. She is really the most hospitable lady I ever met—wanted to insist upon us both pitching our tents in Scarswood. For myself I declined, and do so still, of course; but for you—I have been thinking it over, and am not so sure. This isn't just the place of all places I should choose for you; perpetual skittles in a back yard can't be agreeable to a well-constructed female mind. They are going to call to-day, and if they insist, and you prefer it, why, go with them, if you will."

"They—Sir Peter and Lady Dangerfield, do you mean?"

"No; Lady Dangerfield and her cousin, the Lady Cecil Clive. By the bye, I neglected to mention that I knew Lady Cecil and her father, Lord Ruysland, years ago, in Ireland. They're very civil and all that, and if they insist, as I said, and you prefer it——"

Her large eyes lit with an eager light.

"There can be no question as to my preference, brother; but if you object to it in any way——"

"Oh, I don't object. I would just as soon—sooner, indeed—you went, as you insist upon staying in this place at all. I shall remain here, and run down to see you every day until you have had enough of Castleford and Scarswood. And, now, au revoir for the day—I'm going fishing."

He left the room whistling, flinging his sombrero carelessly on his dark curls, and throwing his fishing-rod

over his shoulder. His sister watched his tall figure out of sight.

"So he knew this Lady Cecil years ago, in Ireland, and never told me! Odd! I wonder if Lanty knew her! I shall ask."

As if the thought had evoked him, enter Lanty Lafferty, a brush in one hand, a pair of his master's riding-boots in the other, darkened by an Algerian sun, otherwise not a whit changed by the wear and tear of six years' soldiering. He deposited the boots on the hearth-rug, and stepped back, like a true artist, to survey his work.

"Thim's thim," said Lanty, "an' polished till ye might a'most shave yersilf in thim. Miss Rose, alanna! is ther anything in the wurruld wide I can do for ye? Shure me very heart's broke intirely since we kem to this place, wid sorra hand's turn to do from mornin' till night."

"What! And you complain of that, Lanty!" his young mistress said, with a smile. "Now, I should think you would be glad of a holiday after your active life out in Algiers. Surely you are not longing so soon to be off again soldiering?"

"May Ould Nick fly wid Algiers an' all belongin' to it afore Misther Redmond takes it into his head to go back there again! It's little I thought this time six years that I'd iver set fut in it or any other haythin lan' like it, whin Misther Redmond an' that beautiful young slip, the lord's daughter, wor coortin' beyant in Torryglen. Faix! it's married I thought they'd be long an' many a day ago, wid mebbe three or four fine childer growin' up about thim an' myself dhry-nurse to thim same. But, oh, wirra! shure the Lord's will be done!"

Mr. Lafferty, with a sort of groan over the hollowness of human hope, shook his head, took a last admiring look at the glitter of the master's boots, and then turned to depart; but the young lady detained him.

"It's a harrowing case, Lanty. Don't be in a hurry. So the lord—I suppose you allude to Lord Ruysland, and don't mean anything irreverent—and his daughter were in Ireland, then, before you ever went to Algiers?"

"Aye; ye may well say they wore. Sorra a hate they did but coort—Misther Redmond and herself—an' the

ould lord lookin' on as plazed as Punch. Aye, faith, an' their looks an' their picters—wasn't she foriver taken off the old rocks and the castle an' meself, for that mather, as if I was a baste. An' thin, whin it's wantin' to marry her he was—shure I could see it—by the powers! it's up an' away they wor like a shot, without as much as a good-by to ye, or go to the divil, or the laste civility in life. An' the young masther—troth! it 'u'd take a dhrop from ye if it was the last in yer eye—to see the shtate he was in, naither aitin' nor slapin', and fallin' away to dog-dhrive afore me very eyes. An' thin all at once Algiers kem in his head, an' he was off hot foot."

Rose O'Donnell smiled bitterly.

"A very common thing in her world, I take it, Lanty. And that's Redmond's secret? and I am to see her? She was pretty, you say, Lanty?"

"The purtiest darlin' iver me eyes looked at, barrin' yersilf."

That day Lady Dangerfield and Lady Cecil Clive called at the Silver Rose, and as a result Miss O'Donnell was installed within the week at Scarswood Park.

Captain O'Donnell was reclining at length in a big chair and puffing a cigar, by permission of Lady Cecil, who was seated by his side when his sister hurried up with an open letter in her hand.

"News from New Orleans, Redmond," she said; "a letter from grandpapa. Madame De Lansac is very ill."

"Madame De Lansac!" exclaimed Redmond O'Donnell; "Ill, is she? I thought that handsome creole was never ill. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"It is serious—at least grandpapa says so. Perhaps his fears exaggerate the danger. She is ill of yellow fever."

"Ah! I should have thought she was pretty well acclimated by this time. And our infant uncle, Rose—how is he? Lady Cecil, it is not given to every man of eight-and-twenty to possess an uncle four years old. Such is my happy fortune. How is the Signor Claude?"

"Little Claude is well," his sister answered. "Poor madame—and I liked her so much. Here is what grand-

papa says: 'Dear Marie, if there is any change for the worse I shall telegraph over at once, and I shall expect Redmond to send or fetch you out again. Claude has pined to a shadow, and calls for Marie night and day.' So you see, Redmond, it may end in our returning after all. Still, I hope there may be no necessity."

Miss O'Donnell folded up her letter and walked away. Lady Cecil looked inquiringly at her companion.

"Marie?" she said. "Your sister's name is Rose, Captain O'Donnell, is it not?"

"Rose, yes; Rose Marie—called after her paternal and maternal grandmothers. Our mother was a Frenchwoman—I think I told you the family pedigree once before, didn't I?—and our grandfather is Monsieur De Lansac, of Menadarva. When Rose went out there, to be brought up as her grandfather's heiress and all that, the old French grandpère changed, without troubling Congress in the matter, the obnoxious Celtic cognomen of O'Donnell for the Gallic patronymic of De Lansac. In other words, Rose O'Donnell left Ireland, and twelve hours after her arrivel in the Crescent City became Marie de Lansac."

There was a faint exclamation—it came from the open window. The speaker and Lady Cecil both looked up, and saw the Cornish baronet and the nursery governess.

"You are ill, Miss Herncastle," Sir Arthur said. "The night air, the falling dew——"

He stopped. No, my Lady Cecil! Lovely, gracious, high-born as you are, there never came for you into those calm, blue eyes the look that glows in them now for your cousin's silent, somber governess. He stopped and looked at her. It was not that she had grown pale, for she was ever that, fixedly pale, but a sort of ashen-gray shadow had crept up over brow and chin, like a waxen mask. For one instant her lips parted, her eyes dilated, then, as if by magic, all signs of change disappeared. Miss Herncastle was herself again, smiling upon her startled companion with her face of marble calm.

"A neuralgic twinge, Sir Arthur." She put her hand to her forehead. "I am subject to them. No—no, you are very kind, but there is no need to look concerned. I

am quite used to it, and it only means I have taken a slight cold."

"And we stood here in a draft of night air. Shall I close the window, Miss Herncastle?"

"And shut out this sweet evening wind, with the scent of the sea and the roses? No, Sir Arthur; I may not be very sentimental or romantic—my days for all that are past—but I think a more practical person than myself might brave a cold in the head and a twinge of *tic doloureux,* for such a breeze and such a prospect as this."

"At least, then, permit me to get you a shawl."

He left her before she could expostulate. She caught her breath for a moment—hard, then leaned forward and listened to the low-spoken words of Lady Cecil.

"Your grandfather's heiress," she was repeating interestedly. "Ah! yes, I remember, you told me that also once before."

"Did I? I'll tell you the sequel now, if you like," the Chasseur d'Afrique said. "There is many a slip, you know, and old Frenchmen sometimes have youthful hearts. Monsieur De Lansac suddenly and unexpectedly got married, six years ago—Master Claude is four years old now, the finest little fellow from here to New Orleans, the heir of Menadarva, and the De Lansac millions. After her grandfather's marriage—I don't know how it was, either—she and madame always seemed excellent friends, but Marie fell into low spirits and ill-health, pined for the green hills of Ulster, and the feudal splendor of Castle O'Donnell—perhaps you remember that venerable pile, Lady Cecil—and wrote me to come and fetch her home. Her grandfather did not wish it. I did not wish it. I could give her no home equal in any way to that she wished to leave, but when a woman will, she will, and all the rest of it. Marie de Lansac, like Marianne in 'The Moated Grange,' was 'aweary, aweary.' The result of many letters, and much feminine logic, was, that I obtained six months' leave of absence, sailed the briny seas and—Finis."

"Not Finis, Captain O'Donnell; there is still a supplement. How is it you chanced to appear before us so suddenly here?"

"Ask Rose," Captain O'Donnell answered "I never

pretend to fathom the motives that sway the feminine intellect. She wanted to come to London—we came to London. She wanted to come to Castleford, Sussex—we came to Castleford, Sussex. Why, I don't know, and I am not sure that I have any curiosity on the subject. Probably Rose knows, just as probably though she does not. As well Sussex as anywhere else. I received and obeyed orders. "And"—Captain O'Donnell paused a moment and glanced up at the fair, starry face on which the cold moonbeams shone—"and I can truly say I don't regret the coming."

He flung away his cigar and sprang to his feet. Lady Dangerfield, with her major, approached at the moment.

"Queenie, are you aware the dew is falling, and that night air is shocking for the complexion? A little moonlight is very nice, but enough is enough, I judge. Come into the house; we are going to have loo and music."

It wanted just a quarter of twelve when Redmond O'Donnell left Scarswood Park, and took his way on foot to the town. He had been offered a horse, he had been offered a bed, and had declined both. To walk on such a night was a luxury. He lit a Manila, and went over the moonlit road with his long cavalryman's stride. It was a perfect night, the sky small-blue, the stars golden and glorious, the moon sailing up serene in their shiny midst. Long shadows of tall trees lay black across the road, the hedge-rows in full blossom made the night air odorous, and, far or near, no living thing was to be seen.

Far or near! Redmond O'Donnell pulled up suddenly in his swinging pace, and looked away afield. His sight was of eagle keenness. What dark moving figure was that yonder, crossing a stile, and vanishing amid the tall gorse? It was a woman—more, it was familiar even at that distance.

In a moment his resolution was taken. What woman was this out for a midnight ramble? She must have come straight from Scarswood, there was no other habitation near. Captain O'Donnell set his lips, flung his cigar among the fern and grasses, vaulted like a boy over the hedge, and in a moment was in full pursuit.

The figure that had vanished in the shadows of the

waving gorse reappeared in the broad moonlit field. A woman—no doubt about that now—a tall woman, walking swiftly, lightly, gracefully, as only young women ever walk. That stately stature, that poise of the head and shoulders, surely all were familiar. And a quarter past twelve, alone and in haste. What mystery was here?

"Some instinct told me six hours ago, when I recognized her first, that something was wrong; I am convinced of it now. Something is wrong. What brings her here?—of all people in the world, and in the character of a nursery governess. And where is she going at this unearthly hour of night?"

Still, she went on—still, the unseen pursuer followed on her track. She never looked back; straight, swift, as one who has some fixed end in view, she went on; and still steady and relentless, determined and stern, Redmond O'Donnell followed in her track.

Her destination was Bracken Hollow. It came upon him, seen for the first time, black and grim, buried among its gloomy trees—lonely and deserted. No lights gleamed anywhere about it; its shutters were all closed —unutterably eery and desolate in the white shimmer of the moon. But the nocturnal visitor opened the grim wooden gate with a key she carried, relocked it, and for the first time paused to look back. She saw no one —the trees, and the shades, and the distance hid the pursuer; only the silver shine of the stars and moon, the boundless blue of sky, the spreading green of earth, and the soft night wind whispering over all. She turned from the gate, hurried up the grass-grown path, and vanished in the inky gloom of the porch.

Redmond O'Donnell emerged from the shadow of the trees, and approached the gruesome dwelling. He paused at the wooden gate, which barred his farther advance, and gazed up at the black forbidding front. In his rambles over the neighborhood he had never come upon this out-of-the-way place—it lay in a spot so remote, so unfrequented, that few ever did come upon it by chance. And those who knew it gave it a wide berth, for it bore the ghastly reputation of a haunted house.

He stood, his folded arms resting on the gate, tall

sycamores and firs burying him in their deepest gloom, and watched and waited for—he hardly knew what. Certainly not for what he heard—a long, wailing cry that came suddenly and hideously from the upper part of the house.

He started up. So blood-curdling, so unexpected was it, that for one moment his heart gave a great bound. It was followed by another, wild, agonized—then dead silence fell.

Physically and morally Redmond O'Donnell was brave to the core, and had given many and strong proofs of his bravery; but a chill, more like fear than anything he had ever experienced, fell upon him now. What hideous thing was this? Was murder being done in this spectral house? It looked a fit place for a murder—all darkness, all silence, all desolation. The unearthly cry was the same that once before had terrified Lady Cecil, but of that circumstance he knew nothing. What deed of evil was going on within these dark walls? Should he force an entrance and see? Would that dreadful cry be repeated? He paused and listened—five, ten, fifteen minutes. No, dead silence reigned. Only the flutter of the leaves, and the chirp of some bird in its nest, the soft rustle of the trees, the faint soughing of the wind—the "voices" of the night—nothing more.

What ought he do? While he still stood there irresolute, lost in wonder and a sort of awe, the porch door opened, and the mysterious lady he had followed appeared. A second figure, the bent figure of a very old woman, came after. The first was speaking.

"No, no, Hannah; you shall not come. Afraid! What nonsense! The time for me to fear anything earthly is past. Nothing living or dead will harm me. I will reach Scarswood in less than three-quarters of an hour, get in as I got out, in spite of all Sir Peter's chains and locks, and to-morrow be once more my lady's staid preceptress of youth. Hannah, Hannah, what a life it is! Go back; try to keep everything quiet; don't let these ghastly shrieks be repeated if you can help it. How fortunate Bracken Hollow is thought to be haunted, and no one ever comes here by night or day!"

"We had a narrow escape not long ago, for all that. It was one of the bad days, and the lady and gentleman heard. I put them off, but it may happen again, and it will. It can't go on forever."

"Nothing goes on forever; I don't want it to go on forever. My time is drawing near; little by little the light is breaking, and my day is coming. Until it does, keep quiet; use the drug if there's too much noise. I will return as speedily as possible. Now, good night."

She ran down the steps, walked with her firm, resolute, fearless tread, down the path, and, as before, lingered a second or two at the gate.

The old woman had gone back to the house, and the tall dark figure under the firs she did not see. She drew out her watch and looked at it by the light of the moon.

"Half-past one!" she murmured. "I had not thought it so late. It will be a quarter past two, then, before I reach Scarswood."

"And a very late hour for Miss Herncastle to be out alone!"

Obeying an impulse he could not resist, the chasseur emerged from the tree-shadows and stood before her.

"With her permission I will see her safely back."

And then, with the bright light of the moon upon his face, Redmond O'Donnell removed his hat and bowed to Miss Herncastle.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER THE KING'S OAK.

She did not scream, she did not even start. There must have been brave blood in the governess' veins. She stood there stock-still and faced him; but in the moonlight that gray pallor came over the resolute face, and the great eyes dilated with something the look of a hunted stag. So for an instant they stood silent, face to face, he with the brilliant, slanting moonbeams full on his dark, handsome, uncovered head, and his piercing, blue eyes pitilessly fixed on her stony face. Then the spell broke: she drew one long breath, the light came

back to her eyes, the natural hue to her face, and she nerved herself to meet and dare the worst. She was one of those exceptional women who possess courage, that rises to battle back in the hour of danger. She opened the gate and spoke.

"Captain Redmond O'Donnell," she said slowly, "it is you. I breathe again. For one moment I absolutely took you for a ghost. My nerves are good, but you gave them a shock."

"Yes," Captain O'Donnell dryly answered. "I think your nerves are good, Miss Herncastle. There are not many young ladies—not many strong-minded governesses even—who would fancy the long, lonely walk between Scarswood and this place, between the ghostly hours of twelve and two. You are going back? As I said before, with your permission, I will accompany you. Under existing circumstances it becomes my duty to see you safely home."

She smiled, came out, relocked the gate, put the key in her pocket, drew the black mantle she wore closely about her, and walked on.

"Your duty?" she repeated, still with that smile. "Duty is a word with a wide signification to some people. For instance, no doubt you considered it your duty to follow me here to-night—to dog my steps, like the hireling assassin of an Italian novel—to—it is not a pleasant word, but the word I want—play the spy."

He was walking by her side. He was lowering the pasture bars of a field as she spoke, to let her through.

"Spy?" he said. "Well, yes, I confess it looks like it. Still, in justice to myself and my motives, let me say something more than simple curiosity has been at work to-night. In the usual course of events, though it might surprise me to see Lady Dangerfield's governess taking a moonlight ramble after midnight, it certainly would not induce me to follow her, and play the spy, as you term it, upon her actions. But another motive than curiosity prompted me to-night—to dog your footsteps, to wait for your reappearance, and to accompany you home."

"Ah, something more! May I ask what it is that induces Captain O'Donnell to take so profound an inter-

est in one so far beneath him as Lady Dangerfield's governess?"

The grave defiance of her tone and manner, the daring mockery of her glance, told him she was prepared to deny everything—to fight every inch of the ground.

"Well, Miss Herncastle," he said, "my first impression when I recognized you—for your carriage, your walk, your bearing, are not to be mistaken anywhere——"

Miss Herncastle bowed sarcastically, as to a compliment.

"My first impression, I say, was that you were walking in your sleep. I knew a somnambulist in Algeria who would walk miles every night, if not locked up. But a little thought, and a few minutes' cautious pursuit convinced me that you were not sleep-walking, but exceedingly wide-awake indeed."

Again Miss Herncastle bowed—again with that derisive, defiant smile on her face. Her whole look, manner, and tone were entirely unlike Miss Herncastle, who seemed more like an animated statue than a living woman in my lady's spacious rooms.

"And being convinced of that, Captain O'Donnell's first impulse—the impulse of all brave men and gallant gentlemen, was—'Miss Herncastle is out for a walk by herself, either on private business, or because of the beauty of the night, or because she cannot sleep. She certainly doesn't want me, and is quite capable of taking care of herself. I will turn back at once and think no more about it.' That was, I know, the first thought of Captain O'Donnell, the bravest chasseur in all the army of Africa. May I ask why he did not act upon it?"

"Simply for this reason—that Captain O'Donnell recognized Miss Herncastle at six o'clock last evening, as she stood upon the lawn reading the 'Battle of Fontenoy.'"

"Indeed!" Miss Herncastle responded, with supreme indifference; "recognized me, did you? I am rather surprised at that. You encountered me in the streets of London probably before I came here?"

"No, madam, I encountered you in the streets of a very different city. I have an excellent memory for

faces, and though I may be puzzled to place them for a little, I generally come out right in the end."

"I congratulate Captain O'Donnell on his excellent memory. And my face puzzled you at first, did it? and you have come out all right in the end?"

"Carry your memory back to the night of the theatricals at Scarswood, the night of my first appearing there. I saw you play *Charlotte Corday*, and in common with all present, your manner of enacting it electrified me. More, I knew immediately that I had seen you before, and in somewhat similar circumstances. I asked who you were, and was told Lady Dangerfield's nursery governess. That nonplused me—my recollections of you were altogether unreconcilable with the character of children's preceptress. Then came last evening, and your very fine rendering of the Irish poem. And again I was puzzled. Your face was perfectly familiar—your attitude, your voice, your action—but where had I seen you? Do you remember Lady Cecil's exclamation?—'Miss Herncastle, you are a born actress!' Like mist before the sun, the haze of my mind was swept away, and I knew you. I repeat it, Miss Herncastle—I knew you."

"You knew me?" Miss Herncastle repeated, but her eyes were gleaming strangely now; "well, sir, you know nothing to my discredit, I hope?"

"Nothing to your discredit, if you have told Lady Dangerfield the truth. But baronets' wives rarely look for their children's instructresses in the person of—a New York actress."

"Captain O'Donnell!"

"Miss Herncastle!"

And then there was a pause, and for an instant how horribly thick and fast Miss Herncastle's heart beat only Miss Herncastle ever knew.

"I don't understand you," she said; but in spite of all her great self-command her voice sounded husky. "A New York actress. I never was in New York in my life. I am an Englishwoman, born and bred."

If he would only take his eyes off her face, she thought her defiant spirit would rise again. But those powerful blue eyes, keen as a knife, bright as steel,

seemed to pierce her very soul, and read all its falsehood there.

"I regret Miss Herncastle takes the trouble to make unnecessary statements," he said coldly. "An Englishwoman born and bred. I believe that. But as surely as we both stand here, I saw you six months ago on a New York stage—one of the most popular actresses of that city."

She turned to him with a swift, impassioned gesture of both hands, theatrical perhaps, but real.

"Why should I lie to you! You are a man of honor, a soldier, and a gentleman—you will not betray me. I will tell the truth, Captain O'Donnell. I am the New York actress—I am the *Ophelia* you beheld six months ago."

"I knew it," he answered with composure. "I saw you many nights in succession. It was impossible for me to be mistaken. And as clever and popular actresses do not as a rule quit the stage, and the brilliant, well-paid, well-dressed, highly strung existence of a popular leading lady, and merge their bright individuality into that of a poorly paid, overtasked drudge of a nursery governess, you will pardon me, I think, for allowing my suspicions to rise, for following your footsteps to-night. I said to myself, this actress, whom a crowded Broadway house applauded to the echo, night after night, has some motive—a sinister one, in all likelihood—in quitting her profession and coming to this house in the rôle of governess."

"What your motive may be, I don't know—it is your own business and in no way concerns me. Unless," he paused—"unless, Miss Herncastle——" he said slowly.

"Yes, Captain O'Donnell—unless——"

"Unless I find trouble of any kind coming of it. You are doing mischief already—do you know it? You have frightened two or three people into the belief that you are a ghost."

Miss Herncastle laughed—not a very natural-sounding laugh.

"Poor little Sir Peter! Is it my fault, Captain O'Donnell, that I resemble some woman he has known. dead and in her grave?"

'Perhaps not; I have not quite made up my mind how that is yet. Second clause——" he gave her a piercing look; "are you aware that Sir Arthur Tregenna is engaged—has been engaged for years—to Lady Cecil Clive?"

"Ah," Miss Herncastle said scornfully, "now we tread on delicate ground. Sir Arthur Tregenna is engaged to Lady Cecil Clive, and Sir Arthur Tregenna has shown the despised nursery governess the simple courtesy of a gentleman to a gentlewoman. For, in spite of the New York acting and English teaching, I am that, sir! He has kindly talked a little to Miss Herncastle, and the earl's daughter deigns to be jealous, with all her beauty, and birth, and breeding, of poor, lowly, plain me. And you, Captain O'Donnell—you of all men—tell me of it."

"And why not I, Miss Herncastle?"

"Because," she burst out fiercely, passionately, "Lady Cecil Clive may be engaged to fifty wealthy baronets, but—she loves you! Ah! you feel that!" She laughed in a wild, reckless sort of way. "She loves you, the soldier of fortune, the free companion, and will give Sir Arthur her hand at the altar, while her heart is in your keeping! And this is the dainty, the spotless, the proud Lady Cecil. What you are or have been to her in the past, you know best; but—I wonder if Sir Arthur does? He is a faithful friend and gallant gentleman. Don't you think, Captain O'Donnell, my judge, my censor, that from your hands and hers he deserves better than that? We are at the park; may I go in? I am tired to death, walking and talking. Has more got to be said, or shall we cry quits, and say good night?"

"How will you get in?" he asked. "The doors and windows seem bolted for the night."

"Doubly bolted, doubly barred," Miss Herncastle replied, with a contemptuous laugh, "to keep out burglars and ghosts, the two bugbears of Sir Peter's life. Nevertheless, I will get in. Good night, Captain O'Donnell." She held out her hand. "I would rather you had not followed me, but you thought you were doing your duty, and I do not blame you. Shall we cry quits, or shall it be war to the knife?"

He touched the ungloved hand she extended and dropped it coldly.

"It shall be whatever Miss Herncastle pleases. Only I should advise her to discontinue those nocturnal rambles. She may get followed again, and by some one less discreet even than myself, and the very strange cries that issue from that mysterious dwelling be found out."

She caught her breath; she had quite forgotten Bracken Hollow.

"You heard——"

"I heard three very unearthly cries, Miss Herncastle. I shall inquire to-morrow who lives in that house.

"Do. You will hear it is an old woman, a very old, harmless woman, but a little, just a little, in her dotage. These moonlight nights affect her, and when her rheumaism twinges come on she cries out as you have heard her."

He smiled as he listened.

"You don't believe me?" she exclaimed. "You think I am telling a second lie."

"My dear Miss Herncastle," the chasseur replied, "we never apply that forcible and impolite word to a lady. And now, as you seem tired, and lest poachers and gamekeepers should see us, I think we had better part. You are quite sure you can get in?"

"Quite sure. Good night, Captain O'Donnell."

He lifted his hat and turned at once. Miss Herncastle stood where he had left her, following the tall, gallant figure that crossed the moonlit field so swiftly, with a strange expression in her eyes and on her lips. Not anger, certainly not hatred, whatever it might be. She stood there until he was out of sight, until the last sound of rapid footsteps on the distant highroad died away. Then she turned, entered the great elm avenue, and disappeared.

* * * * * * *

It was the next night after this that something very strange and very startling occurred to Sir Peter Dangerfield.

Beside his sunset pilgrimage to that remote Castleford churchyard, the Scarswood baronet made other pilgrim-

ages to Castleford, by no means so harmless. In an out-of-the-way street of the town there stood a tall, white house, set in a garden off the highway, and looking the very picture of peace and prosperity. A gentleman named Dubourg was a most agreeable gentleman, Madame Dubourg the most charming, most vivacious, and, when artistically made up for the evening, the prettiest of little women. Perhaps it was owing to the charm of those agreeable people's society that so many officers of the Castleford barracks, and so many of the dashing young country squires, frequented it. Or, perhaps—but this was a secret—perhaps it was owing to the unlimited loo and lansquenet, the écarté and chicken-hazard you might indulge in between nightfall and sunrise. For lights burned behind those closed Venetians the short summer and the long winter nights through, and men sat silent and with pale faces until the rosy lances of sunrise pierced the blinds, and the fall of the cards and the rattle of dice were the only sound to stir the silence. Immense sums were staked, little fortunes were lost and won, and men left haggard and ghastly in the gray dawn, with the cold dew standing on their faces, or rode home flushed, excited, richer by thousands of pounds. The Castleford police kept their eye on this peaceful suburban retreat and the delightful Monsieur and Madame Dubourg, but as yet no raid had been made.

A passion for gambling had ever been latent in the Dangerfield blood. In the days of his poverty it had developed itself in his continual buying of lottery tickets; in the days of his prosperity, at the gaming-table. Insect-hunting might be his hobby—chicken-hazard was his passion. Of the sums he lost and won there Lady Dangerfield knew nothing; her apartments were in the other wing of Scarswood. Of the unearthly hours of his return home no one knew but the head groom, who sat up for him and took his horse, and was well paid for his silence and his service. As a rule, Sir Peter's losses and gains were pretty equal; he was an adept at chicken-hazard, and no more skilled gamester frequented the place.

On the night then following Miss Herncastle's adventure, Sir Peter rode gaily homeward at a much

earlier hour than usual, the richer by six hundred pounds. He was in high good spirits—for him; the night was lovely—bright as day and twice as beautiful. In his elation all his constitutional dread of ghosts, of "black spirits and white, blue spirits and gray," vanished, and he was actually trying to whistle a shrill little tune as he scrambled along. The clocks of Castleford, plainly heard in the stillness, were striking twelve as the baronet entered his own domain and rode up the avenue.

What was that?

His horse had shied so suddenly as nearly to throw him off. They were near a huge oak, called the King's Oak, from the legend that the young Pretender had once taken refuge there from his pursuers. Its great branches cast shadows for yards around. And slowly out of those gloomy shadows—a figure came—a white figure, with streaming hair, and face upturned to the starry sky. All in white—true ghostly garments—noiseless, slow, it glided out and stood full in his pathway.

The bright, cold light of the moon shone full upon it, and he saw—the dead face of Katherine Dangerfield!

Katherine Dangerfield! Not a doubt of it. Who should know the face better than he? as he used to see her long ago in her white dress and flowing hair. Katherine Dangerfield, with a face of stone upturned to the midnight sky.

He sat frozen for a moment—frozen with a horror too intense for words or cry. Then the startled horse shied again, and a shriek rang out in the midnight stillness, those who heard might never forget. The horse plunged madly forward, and there was the sound of a heavy fall.

The groom, half-asleep at his post, rushed out; two or three dogs barked loudly in their kennels. The groom rushed forward and seized the horse, quivering with affright. He was riderless. At a little distance lay Sir Peter, face downward, on the dewy grass, like a dead man. And nothing else earthly or unearthly was anywhere to be seen.

CHAPTER V.

"AS IN A GLASS, DARKLY."

The groom echoed his master's cry as he stooped and lifted him up. He was senseless; he had struck his forehead on a stone, and was bleeding freely. It was an awfully ghastly face upon which the moonlight shone.

The double alarm had been heard. In five minutes another of the grooms, sleeping over the stable, came running to the spot.

"T' maister hurt," groom number one explained; "been flung off his horse. Gi' us a hand here, my lad, and help us lift him oop and carry him into the house."

They bore the stark and bleeding form between them, found his night-key in his pocket, opened the door, and carried him up to his own room. One or two of the servants appeared—the alarm was speeding through the household.

"Best tell my lady," some one said; "and, Davis, hadn't thee better go to Castleford for a surgeon?"

Both suggestions were acted on; my lady was summoned, very much startled and very peevish at being disturbed in her "beauty sleep."

"And what could she do?" she fretfully asked. "Of what use was it summoning her?"

All was confusion, servants standing nonplused, my lady's only emotion, as she stood in her flowing white wrapper, gazing with much disfavor at the bleeding face and motionless figure, one of anger at being routed out. The groom had gone for the surgeon; pending the surgeon's arrival, nothing seemed likely to be done. In the midst of the "confusion worse confounded" appeared upon the scene Miss Herncastle, also in a wrapper, alarmed by the noise, and carrying a night-lamp in her hand.

"Oh, Miss Herncastle!" my lady exclaimed, "perhaps you may know what to do. I am sure I don't, and it was most inconsiderate awakening me in this manner, when my nights are so broken, and with my shattered

nerves and all. And then the sight of blood always makes me sick. Perhaps you can do something for Sir Peter; he has had a fall off his horse, and seems to be stunned. I don't believe he is killed. I wish you would see, and if it's not dangerous I'll go back to bed." My lady shivered in the chill night air; the great rooms and long corridors of Scarswood were drafty. "I would stay with pleasure, of course, if there was any real danger, or if Sir Peter were dying, or that kind of thing, but I know he is not."

"I dare say you would," more than one of the servants present thought, as they listened to this wifely speech, and smiled furtively. "If Sir Peter were dying, my lady, you would stay with pleasure."

Miss Herncastle's calm, pale face, looking more marblelike than ever in the fitful lamplight, bent over the rigid little baronet. She felt his pulse, she wiped away the blood with a wet sponge, and discovered the trifling nature of the cut, and turned to my lady.

"Sir Peter is in a fainting-fit, I think, my lady; probably, too, stunned by the shock of his fall. The wound is nothing, a mere scratch. There is not the slightest danger, I am sure, and not the slightest necessity for your remaining here. In your delicate state of health you may get your death of cold." My lady had never been sick two hours in her whole life. "Permit me to urge you to retire, Lady Dangerfield. I will remain and do all that is necessary."

"Very well, Miss Herncastle, I believe I must. I fear I shall be ill as it is after the shock; my nervous system feels completely unstrung. If there should be any danger I beg you will send me word the very first thing in the morning."

And then my lady, with a wretched expression of countenance, wended her way back to bed, and Miss Herncastle had charge of the Lord of Scarswood. She dismissed all the gaping servants, with one or two exceptions—the housekeeper and a man—and set to work with the air of one who understood her business. She bathed his face and temples with ice-water; she slapped his palms; she applied sal volatile and burnt feathers to his nostrils; and presently there was a flutter of the color-

less eyelashes, a tremor all over the body, and Sir Peter's small, near-sighted, pale-blue eyes opened and fixed on Miss Herncastle.

"My dear Sir Peter, how do you feel now?" the soft, sweet tones of that most soft, sweet voice asked. "Better, I sincerely trust!"

He had not known her at first; he blinked and stared helplessly in the lamplight; but at the second look, the sound of her voice, an awful expression of horror swept over his countenance; he gave another wild cry of affright, half-started up, and fell back senseless once again.

It was really a tragic scene. All the exertions of the governess failed to restore him this second time. The moments dragged on; the housekeeper—not Mrs. Harrison, of Sir John's reign, en passant; she had left upon her master's death—and the butler sat dumb and awe-stricken. Miss Herncastle never wearied in well-doing, applied her restoratives incessantly, until at last, as all the clocks in Scarswood were chiming the half-hour after three, the groom and the surgeon came.

The surgeon was a young man, a new practitioner, and considered very skilful. He brought Sir Peter round for the second time, presently, and once more the baronet's eyes opened to the light of the lamps, and the moon streaming in through the bars of the Venetians.

He stared around, bewildered, his face still keeping its expression of horror, his eyes fixed on the faces of the physician, the housekeeper, and the butler. Then he spoke in an awe-stricken whisper:

"Where is she?"

"Who?" It was the surgeon who asked. "Whom do you mean, my dear Sir Peter?—Lady Dangerfield?"

"I mean Katherine Dangerfield."

The young doctor had heard that story, stranger though he was—had heard of Sir Peter's delusive and ghostly belief, and shook his head.

"There is no such person here, my dear Sir Peter! Your mind is still——"

Sir Peter raised himself up on his elbow, with a sort of scorn.

"I tell you I saw her—saw her twice! Don't talk to

me of my mind, you fool! I saw her! She came—oh, Heaven!—she came and stood before me out there under the trees, all in white, her hair flowing, and her dead eyes turned up to the stars! I saw her! I saw her! and I live to tell it! And five minutes ago I opened my eyes and saw her again, her dead eyes, her stern face looking over the bed!"

The young doctor recoiled. Had Sir Peter gone entirely mad?

Mrs. Butler, the housekeeper, came forward—a genteel creature, and the widow of a curate.

"My dear Sir Peter, you alarm yourself unnecessarily. I assure you"—Mrs. Butler reveled in words of three syllables—"it was the governess, Miss Herncastle, whom you beheld a few minutes ago when consciousness returned. My dear Miss Herncastle, pray come forward and corroborate my assurance."

Miss Herncastle, hovering aloof in the moonlight and the shadows, came slowly forward, speaking as she came.

"I am sorry to have startled Sir Peter by my unfortunate resemblance to his dead relative. Mrs. Butler is right; it was I you saw a few moments ago, Sir Peter."

He sat up in bed gazing upon her, the wild look of horror dying slowly out of his wizen, little, pinched face, and an abject look of fear coming in its place. Her eyes were fixed upon him, steadily, strongly, intensely. What mesmeric power was there in those calm gray eyes to subdue him to her will?

"Lie down, Sir Peter," she said very gently, "and let me give you some medicine. Will you not order him a sedative, a composing draft, Mr. Weymore? I am sure he needs it. I will administer it, and will watch, with Mrs. Butler, until morning."

The young doctor obeyed. He prepared the sedative, and Miss Herncastle administered it. Sir Peter took it from her hand, spellbound it seemed, unable to refuse, unable to take his fascinated eyes off her face. Then he lay back; she arranged his pillows, smoothed the coverlet, made him comfortable, as only a deft-handed woman can. All the time his eyes never left her face—all the time he never uttered a sound. The spell of some mes-

meric force was upon him, and rendered him obedient to her will.

Mr. Weymore, the Castleford surgeon, took his departure.

"Nothing ailed Sir Peter but shattered nerves; he wanted rest, repose, tonics, cheerful society, entire change of air. He saw," he said, "he left him in excellent hands," with a glance of admiration at the calm, serene young lady. "He would go now, and call early the ensuing forenoon. Good night, Miss Herncastle." And Mr. Weymore, with a second admiring glance at that Junolike form and grave, thoughtful face, took his hat and his departure.

The sedative had its effect—Sir Peter fell asleep, Mrs. Butler nodded in her easy chair, Miss Herncastle drew the curtains, raised the blind, seated herself by the window, and with her chin on her hand, looked out. It was past four; the waning moon was dropping pale out of sight in the west, the eastern sky was flushing and brightening already with the beauty and splendor of a new-born summer day. The tall trees stood motionless, the waving grass and cowslips were glistening with dew, long silver lances of light pierced the mysterious green depths of waving fern. It was beautiful—beautiful. Of what did Miss Herncastle think as she sat there with somber face and duskily brooding eyes? After days darkly told.

Sir Peter fell into a deep, refreshing, natural sleep as the morning wore on. Some time after sunrise Lady Cecil entered, hearing for the first time of what had occurred, and offered in her kindly, gentle way to take Miss Herncastle's place. Very haggard in the rosy brightness of the July sunrise Miss Herncastle looked, her eyes heavy, her cheeks pale.

"Go to your room at once," Lady Cecil said. "You look quite worn out. Pray, do not attempt teaching to-day. After you have slept and breakfasted go for a long walk. You need it, I am sure."

When Captain O'Donnell called Lady Cecil imparted the news to him.

"Sir Peter is perfectly quiet now," she concluded.

"The tableau in the sick-room is this—Sir Arthur reading gravely aloud the Castleford *Chronicle* at one side of the bed, Miss Herncastle gravely embroidering at the other, and Sir Peter, lying with wide-open eyes that never leave Miss Herncastle's face. They all looked so very well content that I came away."

She laughed a little and gathered more hyacinths for her bouquet. Again the soldier glanced at her with those blue, brilliant eyes of his, but again the brown eyes were intently fixed on her flowers. Was Lady Cecil jealous?

"It is a pity, no doubt, to interrupt so happy and well-assorted a party," he said, "still I think I will be vandal enough to do it. I am very much interested in this matter, and am going to turn amateur detective and probe it to the bottom. A veritable ghost in this nineteenth century is a novel and wonderful curiosity; let us make the most of it. It is something even to see a man who has seen a ghost. It has never been my good fortune, in all my varied experience, to meet one before. I shall go at once and 'interview' Sir Peter."

But the interview with Sir Peter only served to confuse the captain still more. The baronet confessed to his treatment of Katherine, and while the story disgusted Captain O'Donnell, he resolved to get to the bottom of the mystery and find out whether Katherine Dangerfield was really dead, and, if so, who this Miss Herncastle was who possessed Katherine's features.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF THE IVORY MINIATURE.

"Lady Cecil," Lord Ruysland said, "a word with you!"

It was an ominous beginning. The earl never called his daughter by her proper name of title unless in a state of unusual gravity or unusual displeasure. They were alone together. The hour was just after dinner, and the ladies, among whom the governess had figured, had adjourned from the dining to the drawing room. Miss O'Donnell had gone to the piano, my lady perused a popular novel. Miss Herncastle seated herself by the

window with that filmy lace embroidery—Lady Dangerfield kept her constantly employed—and Lady Cecil, feeling oppressed and out of spirits somehow, had thrown a black lace mantilla over her head and white summer dress, and stepped through one of the open windows out upon the lawn, and down to the terrace. She was pacing slowly and thoughtfully up and down, a lovely vision in the sunset, when her father's voice abruptly spoke behind her.

She turned in surprise. She had imagined him with the other gentlemen, Sir Arthur, the major, and Sir Peter, over the wine and after-dinner talk, and here he was beside her, with a face of ominous gravity.

"With me, papa? Certainly. What is it?"

But her heart fluttered, guiltily a little, as she asked the question, what it was—something very unpleasant, flashed upon her at once.

"What is it?" Do you really need to ask that question, Lady Cecil? I have come to demand an explanation of your extraordinary conduct of late."

"My extraordinary conduct! Really, papa——"

"That will do! You feign surprise very well, my dear; but it doesn't deceive me. I repeat—your extraordinary conduct! What do you intend by it? In regard to Miss Herncastle, I mean, of course."

"Miss Herncastle!"

"Lady Cecil, be good enough to cease repeating everything I say as if you were a parrot," her father said, more irritation in his face and tone than she had ever seen or heard there before in her life. "Your hearing is not defective, I hope—I said Miss Herncastle. What do you mean by your conduct to that young woman? Why do you insist upon forcing her society upon us—by making her one of the family, as it were—by having her to dine with us? Oh, don't lay the blame upon Ginevra—she would never think of so preposterous a thing if left to herself. I repeat once more, Lady Cecil—what does it mean?"

"Really, papa"—and Lady Cecil tried to laugh—"I did not know so simple a matter would so seriously exercise you. I thought you believed in equality, fraternity

—were a radical of the most rabid sort in politics, and——"

"Keep to the point, if you please," the earl interrupted impatiently; "we're not talking politics now. It does not matter what I believe, whether I am radical or conservative in this affair, that I can see. It is a purely personal and family concern. Cecil!"—sternly—"has Sir Arthur Tregenna formally proposed to you yet?"

The faint carnation rose up all over Lady Cecil's fair, pearly face.

"No, papa."

"I thought not," but his face darkened as he said it. "And whose fault is that? Not Sir Arthur's, I am very certain."

"Sir Arthur's, surely, papa. What would you have? The absurd customs of England require that a lady shall wait until she is asked. Do you wish me to go to Sir Arthur and order him to marry me?"

"I wish you to act like a rational being, to cease acting in such a manner as to render a proposal forever impossible. Are you wilfully blind, that you cannot see he is falling in love with that confounded nursery governess?"

"My sight is perfect," Lady Cecil answered coldly; "and if it were not I still might see that. Sir Arthur takes little pains to conceal his preference. As it is probably the first time that austere gentleman ever felt a touch of the tender passion, it would be thousand pities to come between him and it. I certainly shall not."

"What do you mean?"

"This, papa," Lady Cecil said, "there is no use in getting angry or excited—that if Sir Arthur prefers Miss Herncastle to me I shall never be Miss Herncastle's rival. And if he can honestly and truly fall in love with her, as I believe it is in his nature to love, I honor and congratulate him on his choice. Why should you or I try to thwart it? He is not bound to me in any way; he cares as little for me, in the way of love, as I do for him. Miss Herncastle is a much cleverer woman than I am, or ever shall be, and if he wishes it, why, let him marry her. She certainly suits him much better than I should, and for the difference in rank, if he can over-

look that, we surely may. Of this be very certain"—her eyes flashed and her color rose—"I will accept no man's hand while his heart is another woman's, though his fortune were three times thirty thousand a year."

The earl listened, amaze, scorn, anger, passion, swaying alternately over his placid face; but he heard her to the end. His eyes were fixed upon her proud, resolute face, the sneer that rarely left them curling his lips cynically now.

"Fine sentiments," he said; "fine heroics, taken second-hand, no doubt, from the Castleford circulating library. You appear to have changed your mind of late, my dear; we did not hear these lofty sentiments when we spoke together some weeks ago of this matter in London. But things have changed since then, and other actors have appeared upon the scene. I wonder now"—he folded his arms and looked at her with sneering sarcasm—"whether the coming of that very fine young Irishman, Redmond O'Donnell, has had anything to do with it?"

Long practise had taught him to stab home—surely and strongly. The flush of color that had arisen to her face died out as he spoke, leaving her whiter than her dress.

"This is your revenge," she said slowly; "but I think my father might have spared me that. From other lips I should deem it an insult."

"Indeed. And why, I wonder? He's very handsome, he has the dash and the air noble you women love, and he is the 'hero of a thousand battles.' You all like strong warriors, don't you? And then—it may have been fancy—but I used to think, long ago in Ireland, that you were in some danger of—you understand, I suppose? Did you ever wonder, my dear, why I carried you off so suddenly? That was why. You were only sixteen, and sixteen is so supremely silly. And though I don't think your youthful penchant was returned at that time, Irish hearts are proverbially inflammable, and it might have been. Being poor as a church mouse yourself, it would hardly have done to ally you to another church mouse as long as bread and cheese are requisites of existence. I carried you off, and you pined on the stem for a few

weeks, then Cecil was herself again. Now the hero of Torryglen is with us once more; and I remember the French have a proverb about one always returning to his first love. Your conduct of late has certainly been so extraordinary that there must be some reason for it."

He stopped.

She never spoke. She was white to the lips with some painful inward emotion; her brown eyes looked straight before her, with a light no one had ever seen before in the soft eyes of *La Reine Blanche.*

"You do not answer," her father said, beginning to feel that he might have gone too far; "perhaps, then, I am wrong after all in my suppositions. If so, I beg your pardon. But this matter lies so near my heart, my dear, that you will forgive me if in my displeasure and disappointment I speak harshly."

His heart! The Right Honorable the Earl of Ruysland's heart! A smile crossed his daughter's lips—a faint, bitter smile, not pleasant to see on lips so young and sweet.

"I repeat it," her father said, as though answering that scornful smile; "my heart is set upon your marriage with the son of my oldest friend. It will be the bitterest blow of my life if that marriage is not consummated."

"Papa," Lady Cecil answered, "let us drop our masks —there is no one to see or hear. Your heart is fixed on my marriage with the son of your oldest friend. How would it be if the son of that oldest friend were penniless as—as Redmond O'Donnell, for instance, whom you fear so greatly? It is the thirty thousand a year you wish me to marry, is it not? It is a rich and liberal son-in-law your heart is set on, I fancy. You call it by a prettier name, but that is what it really comes to."

"Very well, my dear—on the thirty thousand, if you will. I am penniless, you are penniless. Is the degradation of marrying a fortune greater than the degradation of living on the bounty of a man like Peter Dangerfield? You are an earl's daughter, a reigning belle, high-born and high-bred, and you are a pauper. The food you eat, the roof that shelters you, the dress you wear, are unpaid for. This sort of thing can't go on for-

ever. A crisis is very near—flight, exile for me; for you, my proud, high-spirited Cecil, what?"

She leaned against a slender rose-wreathed pilaster, and covered her face with both hands, her heart too full for words.

"Come," the earl continued quickly, "your duty is to save Sir Arthur from this governess—an adventuress, I believe, of the most unprincipled sort. I can't see Sir Arthur embark on a course that means lifelong misery. You must save him, Cecil."

She turned abruptly to leave him, a bitterness in her voice she hardly strove to conceal, a passion in her eyes rarely seen there.

"Have you anything more to say?" she asked abruptly; "it is turning chilly, and I am cold." She shivered as she spoke, and her fair face looked quite colorless in the fading light. "Do as you will. It is useless to resist fate. If I must marry Sir Arthur—I must. But if Miss Herncastle be an adventuress, I wonder what I am?"

She pushed aside the rich curtains of silk and lace, and stepped into the drawing-room. The lamps filled the long apartment with golden mellow light, and Sir Arthur sat at the governess' side. Squire Talbot had called, and he was entertaining Miss O'Donnell. Her brother was not present; for that, at least, Lady Cecil was grateful.

Lady Cecil took the vacant place at the piano. Her father, following her in, crossed without compunction to the pair in the window recess, the lady embroidering still, the gentleman watching the clear-cut profile as it bent over the work, the long, white, swift fingers, and neither talking much.

"How hard you work, Miss Herncastle!" his lordship said blandly; "you put us idle people to shame. Is Sir Arthur taking lessons in needlework? I hope you find him an apt pupil, my dear young lady?"

Sir Arthur colored, partly with annoyance, partly with a sense of compunction. Latterly it had begun to dawn upon him that his mission to Scarswood had not been fulfilled—that he had not asked Lady Cecil to be his wife. And in part he stood committed to her. She must know what had brought him down; she must know what had been on his lips when Miss Herncastle entered

the boudoir. And Miss Herncastle! in some way he stood committed here, too. She attracted him as no woman had ever done before in his life, and he had made no secret of that attraction. To keep faith with one, he must in a way break it to the other. Like that gallant knight of the Laureate's story, "his honor rooted in dishonor stood." And this evening he was realizing it for the first time.

Miss Herncastle smiled, perfectly unembarrassed, and reached over for the dainty little basket that held her flosses and laces. Either by accident or design, the earl never knew which, the little basket upset, and flosses and laces fell in a shining heap at the earl's feet. Something else fell, too—a square, hard substance that flashed in the gaslight. Sir Arthur picked up the basket and fancy-work, his lordship the square substance. What was it? A portrait—an old-fashioned ivory miniature, beautifully painted and set in a jeweled frame. His eyes fell upon it, and a sudden stillness of great surprise came over him from head to foot; then he turned round and looked Miss Herncastle full in the face.

She met his gaze with calm composure, and reached out her hand.

"My favorite souvenir," she said. "I hope it is not injured. How stupid of me to upset the basket. Thanks, my lord."

But my lord still held the ivory miniature, still looked at Miss Herncastle.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in an altered voice; "it sounds rather impertinent, but I must ask where you got this?"

Miss Herncastle looked surprised.

"That! that picture, my lord? Oh! 'thereby hangs a tale.' Do you know who it is?"

"Miss Herncastle, do you?"

"No; and I have the greatest curiosity on the subject. That picture came into my possession in the most accidental manner, and for the past six years I have been trying to discover its owner, but as yet I have not succeeded. Her name was Mrs. Vavasor."

"Mrs. Vavasor! I knew more than one Mrs. Vavasor,

out none of them in the least likely to possess this picture."

"You know the original of that picture, then, my lord?"

"Undoubtedly, Miss Herncastle. The original of this picture is Major Lionel Cardonnell, my late wife's only brother, at present in Quebec. May I, in turn, inquire who was Mrs. Vavasor, and how came she to be possessed of this?"

He was watching her—vague, strange suspicions afloat in his mind. From first to last she was a strange, mysterious creature, this governess; an air of mystery appeared to enshroud her; her possession of his brother-in-law's picture seemed to cap the climax.

Miss Herncastle met his suspicious gaze with the calm of conscious rectitude.

"Two questions, my lord, which, unfortunately, I am incapable of answering. Six years ago I gave music lessons in the family of a mercantile gentleman—his name was Jones, and he has since emigrated to Australia with his family; and visiting that family I met Mrs. Vavasor. We became very friendly, not to the point of intimacy, though, and one day, upon my leaving the house, she gave me this portrait, and asked me to take it to a jeweler's to have one of the stones replaced in the case. She was suffering from headache herself, she said, and dare not venture out, and servants were too careless to be trusted. She told me, laughingly, that it was the portrait of an old lover of hers. I took it, and for four days again did not visit the family. When I returned I discovered Mrs. Vavasor had suddenly gone away; they had discovered something concerning her not to her credit—had quarreled and parted. She had gone to France, they said, and refused to have anything to do with her property. Under these circumstances I kept the picture until she should send for it. She never did send for it, and I have never met her since. I never heard the name of the gentleman whose likeness it is until to-day."

She threaded her needle, and placidly went on with her work. The earl listened in profound silence. It sounded plausible enough, and yet he did not believe

her. But then, he was prejudiced against Miss Herncastle. He handed it back to her and arose.

"What was your Mrs. Vavasor like, Miss Herncastle?"

"She was a little, dark woman of French extraction, I believe, in spite of her English name, with black eyes and hair, and an incessant smile. As a rule, people called her very pretty. Her first name was Harriet."

"Harriet? Yes—I see—I see. It was Harriet Lelacheur, to a dead certainty—Mrs. Harman, rather, under an alias. I thought so from the first. I thought her dead years ago."

He sauntered away. Sir Arthur in turn took the ivory miniature and gazed at it.

"Did you know Major Cardonnell, Sir Arthur? But I suppose you must have been too young."

"No. I never saw Lionel Cardonnell," the baronet said; "I heard the story often, though. Very handsome face, is it not?—much handsomer than that of the late Countess of Ruysland, and yet like her, too."

"You knew the countess?"

"Certainly not. The Countess of Ruysland died before her daughter was a week old, but I have often seen her picture. Lady Cecil wears one, and there is a large painting at Clive Court."

"Does Lady Cecil resemble her mother? If so, her mother must certainly have been very beautiful."

"She does not in the least resemble her mother—her father, either, as you may see—nor any relative of the Clive or Cardonnell families. Miss Herncastle, will you think it strange if I tell you—you resemble at times, in the most singular manner, Lady Ruysland?"

"Impossible, Sir Arthur!"

"It is perfectly true. His lordship saw the resemblance the first evening he met you—Lady Cecil has often spoken of the singular familiarity of your face. I did not remark it to her, but I know it is your resemblance to her mother. Something in the expression, something in the poise of the head and the color of the eyes, are precisely the same as her ladyship's portraits. You are much more like the late Lady Ruysland than her own daughter."

Her self-command was wonderful, but the filmy web

of flossy lace dropped suddenly in her lap, and her face turned from him to the purple twilight, where the odorous roses slept, and the tall arum lilies hung their snowy heads. It was a minute before she could trust herself to speak. Then her soft, musical laugh chimed on the stillness, her smiling face turned to him once more.

"Another unaccountable resemblance," she said. "Really, Sir Arthur, I begin to think I must be a most abnormal sort of a person. I startle poor, nervous Sir Peter by my real or fancied resemblance to a young lady relative of his dead and gone; I startle the earl by my resemblance to his late wife; I wonder now whose double I shall find myself next?"

"It is odd," Sir Arthur answered, looking at her gravely. "Your resemblance to the late Miss Katherine Dangerfield must be very striking indeed. Mr. Talbot, of Morecambe, is almost as much impressed by it as Sir Peter. Your likeness to Lady Ruysland's portrait is only seen at times, and then not very strongly. Still it is there."

"And this handsome young officer is Lady Ruysland's brother. I have puzzled myself a thousand times trying to imagine who it could be, so it is satisfactory to know even that much. But will you think me impertinently curious, Sir Arthur, if I should ask to know even more? There are reasons, not easily to be explained, connected with Mrs. Vavasor, that make me extremely desirous to know all I can of her antecedents. Was this gentleman—so greatly above her in rank as he must have been—really her lover?"

"Mrs. Vavasor? But you forget, Miss Herncastle, I do not know your Mrs. Vavasor. Lionel Cardonnell has not set foot in England for over five-and-twenty years. He has been stationed at every military depot in the Canadas, the Provinces, and Bermuda. At present he is in Quebec. Your Mrs. Vavasor may have known him out there."

"No," Miss Herncastle replied, "I fancy not. She knew him in England, and very long ago. Her maiden name was Harriet Lelacheur."

"Oh," cried Sir Arthur, a new light of intelligence breaking over him. "Harriet Lelacheur. Then it is

quite clear, of course. And you knew Mrs. Harman, did you, Miss Herncastle?"

"I have met her. She called herself Mrs. Vavasor, though an alias, possibly."

"Or possibly she married again after Harman's death. Well, Miss Herncastle, she told you the truth concerning Cardonnell—he was her lover."

"And would have been her husband if he could—is that true also, Sir Arthur?"

"Perfectly true, I believe."

"Lady Ruysland—his sister—carried her off to some lonely place on the Cornish coast, and imprisoned her there, while he exchanged into a regiment ordered to Canada," pursued Miss Herncastle."

"Again quite true. I see she has been making you her confidante. He is married there—to a French Canadian, I believe, of wealth and beauty, and no doubt laughs when he recalls his first passion for his sister's *femme de chambre,* and congratulates himself upon his narrow escape. Still, if one may venture to express an opinion, it can hardly be called a very creditable act on the part of the late countess."

"What?" the governess cried, "to save her brother from a designing adventuress—ruining his life by a marriage with such a woman as that?"

He looked at her in surprise, and a little, perhaps, in displeasure.

"A designing adventuress? But she was not a designing adventuress in those days. She was beneath him in rank, certainly, but they loved each other very sincerely. May a man not stoop sometimes to raise the woman of his choice to his own social level, and yet be both perfectly happy?"

This was treading on delicate ground. His eyes brightened as he spoke. Miss Herncastle picked up her work, took another needleful of floss, and went calmly on.

"Certainly, if the woman of his choice be a lady. But that Harriet Lelacheur could never have been. From my experience of her she must always have been underbred, selfish, coarse, and wicked. These qualities may not have shown in the happy days of her youth—a

lover's blind eyes may not have seen them; believe me, though, they were always there. It was a fortunate escape for Major Cardonnell; he has reason to congratulate himself, and thank his sister's clever strategy. By the way, though Lady Ruysland and her ex-waiting-maid must have become reconciled afterward, from what I heard the latter say."

She was working industriously once more. The Cornish baronet was watching her.

"They did. My lady, by way of recompense, dowered her waiting-maid, and married her to a tradesman of the place; his name was Harman. He died before the first year of his married life had expired, leaving his young wife and a babe of a fortnight old. Of course, of all this I know nothing personally; I have heard my poor father, though, and Lord Ruysland speak of it so often that it seems familiar to me as a household word."

"And Lady Ruysland came to the aid of her servant again, I suppose, in her hour of widowhood and adversity. She was noble in that, at least."

"She was noble in all things," Sir Arthur answered; "it was a loyal and generous nature, but with a passionate pride, a fiery temper, a latent jealousy and recklessness that have wrecked many a noble nature before. It is not a pleasant story, Miss Herncastle, but at least it is no secret. She flew to her humble friend, not to succor, but for shelter."

"For shelter," Miss Herncastle repeated, looking at him steadily; "and died in her arms."

"Ah! you know the story. Yes, in that humble cottage, with only her old servant by her side, poor, passionate, erring Lady Ruysland died. She was insanely jealous—who is to tell whether with or without cause?—of one who had been her rival years before, younger, fairer than herself, as highly born, but poor. His lordship was absent, in Italy—rumor said, to be near her. Very likely rumor erred, as it usually does; at least her ladyship believed it, and on the night of the earl's return a violent scene ensued. He left her in high anger; bitter words had passed; and in the frenzy of her rage and jealousy she fled. Next morning she was nowhere to be found. All day they looked for her in vain. At night-

fall a messenger came to Clive Court from Mrs. Harman, summoning his lordship. A daughter had been born, a wife was dead."

Once more the embroidery dropped in Miss Herncastle's lap. Her eyes were dilated, fixed on his face; her lips were breathless and apart in the intensity of her interest.

"They brought the poor dead lady home, the child they left with Mrs. Harman to nurse. Whether or no Lord Ruysland really had or had not wronged his wife, no one will ever know now. Her death was a terrible blow to him—for a time." The speaker paused a second, glanced across at his lordship's serenely high-bred, placid countenance, and smiled. "For a time. We lose our nearest and dearest, and the world goes round much the same as ever, and we with it, and we eat, drink, and are merry, and—forget. Clive Court was shut up. Mrs. Harman was handsomely pensioned, and the baby, Lady Cecil, left with her."

For two years Lord Ruysland was absent; then a letter from Mrs. Harman recalled him. She was of French extraction, and had taken a sudden fancy to visit her relations in Paris—would his lordship come and take his little daughter and let her go? He returned to England, received Lady Cecil from her hands, placed her with some relatives in a remote part of England to grow up, and returned to his wandering life. Mrs. Harman left England with her daughter, and I fancy the earl never heard of her from that day to this, until he chanced to see his brother-in-law's picture a few moments ago. Miss Herncastle, Lady Cecil has left the piano; after all this talking will you not reward me by a little of your matchless music?"

She arose at once and went with him to the piano. For nearly an hour she sat playing bravely and brilliantly, he seated near, his face in shadow, his ears drinking in those sweetest strains. Then she got up, and for the first time in his experience of her, held out her hand as she said good night.

"You have done me a great favor to-night, Sir Arthur," she said; "greater than you know. Let me thank you, and—good night."

He looked up at her in surprise. "A great favor," he repeated, holding her firm, cold hand in his clasp; "I don't understand, Miss Herncastle."

She smiled—a strange exultant sort of smile—looking not at him, but across the room, at the figures of the Earl of Ruysland and the Lady Cecil Clive. Long after he had reason to know what the strange and triumphant smile meant.

"You may understand some day, Sir Arthur, and sooner than you think. Once more, good night."

With the words she was gone. He watched the tall, commanding figure as it swept across the room and disappeared. Other eyes had witnessed that farewell; the Earl of Ruysland set his lips, the delicate waxen cheek of Lady Cecil flushed.

"There shall be an end of this," his lordship thought sternly. "You have gone the length of your tether, Sir Arthur Tregenna; it is high time to pull you up."

Miss Herncastle went up to her room, but not to bed. She sat down by the open window, a starry light in her eyes, almost a flush of color on her marble face.

"At last! at last! at last!" her lips said.

She was smiling—a smile not good to see. Her eyes were fixed on the night prospect, but she saw nothing. So, for upward of an hour, she sat. She could hear the sounds from below, the music, the soft hum of voices, the low laughter. She could hear, but she hardly seemed to listen. She was wrapped in herself; that glowing, exulting face, you would not have known it again.

"At last! at last!" she kept softly repeating, "my hour has come."

She arose after a time. Even through her absorption the falling dew struck chill. She arose, closed the window and the curtains, lit the lamp, and flung the ivory miniature contemptuously across into an open trunk.

"Lie there," she said; "you have done your work. I want you no more. I have waited six years—a long time; but even Troy fell at last. I have heard all I wanted to hear. I see my way clear to the end now!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCAR ON THE TEMPLE.

"I tell you, madam, you shall not go!"

"And I tell you, sir, I shall."

"Lady Dangerfield, I repeat it, you shall never go to that disreputable woman's house in that disgusting dress."

"Sir Peter Dangerfield, I repeat it, as sure as the night after to-morrow comes, I will go to Mrs. Everleigh's masquerade in the costume of a page."

And then husband and wife stood still, and paused for breath, and glared at each other, as much more devoted husbands and wives will do at times in the marital relation, I am told.

It was three days after Sir Peter's attack, and for two days the little baronet had been sufficiently recovered to enliven the drawing-room with the brightness of his presence. All at once the solitude of his study had become unbearable to him; his bugs and beetles, his bees and butterflies afforded him no consolation. Lights, life, human faces, human voices, he craved them day and night. And so it came about, in the first time of Lady Dangerfield's experience of him, her husband had nothing else to do but watch her and grow jealous. Horribly and ferociously jealous. He didn't care a pin's point in the way of love for his wife, but she was his wife, and as long as a lady is that, the gentleman whose name she honors has legal right certainly to most of her tender looks, whispered sentences, twilight walks, etc., etc. And Sir Peter got none of these, and Major Frankland got a great many.

Mrs. Everleigh's fancy-dress party brought matters to a climax.

Mrs. Everleigh was an exceedingly charming lady, of whom Castleford knew very little indeed, except that she was excessively rich, very fond of spending her money, and enjoying herself, and—a divorced wife. Where Mr. Everleigh was, and why he had put away the wife of his

bosom, a great many asked and nobody answered. Mrs. Everleigh herself put her perfumed *mouchoir* to her blue eyes when the harrowing subject was alluded to—called Mr. Everleigh a brute and herself a martyr, and left things in their general misty and uncomfortable state of doubt. But she dressed elegantly, lived luxuriously, gave the most brilliant receptions far or near. The more fastidious ladies of the neighborhood, Lady Cecil among them, fought shy of the charming Mrs. Everleigh. Lady Dangerfield and she became bosom friends at once. And this week Mrs. Everleigh's masquerade came off—the only thing of its kind that had been dreamed of—and my lady and the major were going. The major as the "Chief of Lara," gloomy and splendid, and misanthropical, in black velvet and plumes, like a mute at a funeral, and my lady was going as Kaled, Lara's page—the devoted, the adoring Kaled. By the merest chance, for my lady never annoyed her nervous husband with these foolish trifles, he had discovered the ball, the costume, everything that he would have been much better off without knowing, and his brimming cup flowed over! He folded his small arms across his small chest, he planted his small feet resolutely on the carpet, and he stood and looked at her.

"You mean to go, then, Lady Dangerfield?"

"I mean to go, as surely as you stand there, Sir Peter Dangerfield."

"In this disgusting dress?"

"You called it disgusting once before. I don't perceive the disgusting. It's a beautiful little dress, and I expect to look lovely in it."

"And with Major Frankland, Ginevra?"

"With Major Frankland."

"Very well, Lady Dangerfield"—he was yellower than ever—he was trembling with passion; "then hear me. If you go to Mrs. Everleigh's as page to that man's knight, then—remain with Mrs. Everleigh—don't come back here. I have endured a good deal; I will not endure this. Go if you will; I shall not lift a finger to prevent you; but—don't come back. Scarswood is mine; the mistresses of Scarswood have been honorable women

always; you shall not be the first to dwell beneath its roof and disgrace it—that I swear!"

There was a second auditor to this marital outbreak—an auditor who stood almost as surprised as my lady herself. It was Miss Herncastle, who had entered in the full tide of the discussion, and had stood, not seeming to know exactly whether to go back or go on. My lady turned and saw her now.

"Miss Herncastle!" she cried, in haughty anger. "You—and listening?"

"Not listening, my lady," Miss Herncastle answered, meeting her angry eyes steadily. "You told me this morning when the doublet was completed to tell you, and let you try it on. It is finished, and, obeying your orders, I came in search of you at once."

For Miss Herncastle had been ordered to desert the schoolroom latterly, and turn seamstress in general to my lady. And it was Miss Herncastle who, with boundless taste and good nature, had suggested the two costumes, and produced a little painting of Lara and Kaled. The major and Lady Dangerfield had both been charmed with the idea. The major was now up in London selecting his costume, and Miss Herncastle had ridden into town with my lady; silk and velvet, lace and feathers had been purchased, the governess and my lady's-maid had since sewed, sewed, sewed night and day. Miss Herncastle had such taste, such clever fingers, and was altogether a miracle of dexterity and cheerfulness. Lady Dangerfield's ruffled plumage smoothed again.

"So I did. And it is ready? But Sir Peter objects so strongly—is so disagreeable—still, I must run up and see it."

A faint, derisive smile dawned upon the face of the governess, as she stepped back to let my lady pass her.

The dress lay spread upon a bed—a shining vision of carmine silk, white ostrich-plumes, gold braid, and black velvet. My lady's eyes lit up like black diamonds, as she lifted the separate articles that composed the costume, and held them up to glisten in the sunlight.

"Oh!"—a long inspiration—"Miss Herncastle, your taste is perfect—perfect; I never saw anything so lovely. And to think that preposterous little baronet says I shall

not wear it. Delphine, take your sewing into your own room—I am going to try this on." Exit Delphine with a curtsy. My lady sinks into a chair. "Do my hair, Miss Herncastle," she says impatiently; "I shall try it on, at least."

Miss Herncastle's deft fingers go to work. Embroidery, costume-making, hair-dressing—nothing seems to come amiss to these deft white fingers.

"Now, my lady. No, don't look in the glass yet, please. Let me dress you; when everything is on, then you shall look and see the effect."

And then Miss Herncastle set to work in earnest, my lady aiding and abetting. She had locked the door; profound silence, befitting the importance of the moment, reigned. Silken hose, buckled shoes, little baggy silken unmentionables, a doublet of carmine silk, all aglimmer with gold cord and lace and sparkling buttons; a little black velvet cloak, lined with deep rose red, seeming but a brighter shade of the carmine, clasped jauntily a little to one side, and the one end flung back over the shoulder; a little black velvet béret, or cap, set on one side the black crape-hair, a long ostrich-plume sweeping over the shoulder and fastened at the side by a diamond aigrette; a tiny rapier set in a jeweled scabbard—that was the radiant, sparkling vision my lady's glass showed her. In all her life, she had never looked so nearly beautiful as in this boyish travesty—in this glowing carmine silk, and lofty plume, and black velvet.

"Oh!" she said no more—only that one long-drawn breath. She stood and contemplated the picture in silent ecstasy.

"It is perfect—it is beautiful," Miss Herncastle murmured; "I never saw your ladyship look half so well in anything before. It will be the costume of the ball."

"It is lovely—lovely," my lady responded, still staring in an ecstasy; "but, Miss Herncastle, I have already told you Sir Peter has taken it into his imbecile head to object—to absolutely forbid. He calls the dress disgraceful—nonsense—and Mrs. Everleigh disreputable. And you have no idea how disagreeable and how obstinate Sir Peter Dangerfield can be when he likes."

Miss Herncastle smiled again—that slight, chill, unpleasant smile.

"Have I not? But I think I have. Men have peculiar notions on these subjects, and with a man like Sir Peter, it is much easier to let him have his way than to do combat. They never yield an inch."

"Give way. That means to give up the idea of the ball—to submit to be tyrannized over—not to wear this exquisite dress. Miss Herncastle, do I hear you aright?"

"You hear, but you do not understand. Of course, you go to the ball—only—let Sir Peter think you don't. It will be easy enough to deceive him. It may involve a few falsehoods, but your ladyship will not stickle at that. You go to the ball in peace—and he goes to bed in peace, and what he never knows will never grieve him."

"But how is it to be done?"

Miss Herncastle paused a moment in deep thought, her brows knit.

"In this way," she said. "Write to Major Frankland in London, and tell him when he returns to Castleford, on Thursday evening, to remain in Castleford, at one of the inns, instead of coming to Scarswood. It is as much on his account as on account of the page's dress that Sir Peter objects. You can tell Sir Peter, if you choose, that you have given up the idea—that Major Frankland has been detained in town. He will not believe it, of course, but when the night arrives and he does not return, and he sees you retire for the night, he will. Once in your room, you dress, of course; bribe the coachman to drive you quietly to Mrs. Everleigh's, and wait the breaking up of the ball. At Mrs. Everleigh's you meet the major; he can keep quiet in the town all the following day, and in the evening come here as though direct from the station. You will have enjoyed the ball, and Sir Peter be none the wiser."

My lady listened in calm approbation, undisturbed by conscientious qualms of any kind.

"A famous idea, Miss Herncastle," she said, as the governess ceased. "What a head you have for plotting and taking people in. One would think you had done nothing else all your life."

Miss Herncastle received this involuntary compliment

with becoming modesty, that faint, derisive smile creeping for a second or two around her handsome mouth. But she was busy removing the page's attire, and my lady did not see it.

"If you write to Major Frankland at once, my lady," she said, "I will take your letter to the post-office myself, and he will get it in time to-morrow. It will simply be doing a kindness to Sir Peter to keep him in the dark about the ball; his imaginary troubles about ghosts are quite enough for him at present."

She placed writing materials before my lady, and my lady, in her spidery Italian tracery, dashed off a page or two to the major, apprising him of the facts, of Sir Peter's unexpected disapproval, and Miss Herncastle's clever plan.

Miss Herncastle walked into town over the dusty high-road, under the boiling July sun, and posted my lady's letter. She returned weary, dusty, foot-sore, as the stable clock was striking six, and as she walked up the avenue, came face to face with Sir Peter and Captain O'Donnell.

The little cowardly baronet had been seized with a sudden and great fancy for the tall, soldierly, fearless Irishman. A confidant of some kind he must have. Frankland was out of the question—Sir Arthur he stood, like most people, in awe of—the earl would have listened suavely and sneered secretly; O'Donnell, therefore, only remained. And O'Donnell suited him exactly; he had not a grain of fear in his nature; he had a cool head, a steady nerve, and he was intensely interested in the whole affair. O'Donnell had taken it up, had promised to investigate, did not believe it was a ghost, and Sir Peter breathed again.

Both gentlemen bowed to the pale, tired-looking governess. The baronet turned round, and looked darkly and suspiciously after her.

"Where has she been now?" he asked distrustfully. "What do all these long, solitary rambles mean? Don't you see the likeness, O'Donnell, to the picture of Katherine Dangerfield? You must be blind if you do not."

"Oh, I see a certain likeness," O'Donnell repeated, "but nothing so marked as to be terrifying. By the bye, I was examining the photograph with a magnifying-glass

and I discovered a mark or scar of some kind on the left side of the face, right above the temple. Now, had Katherine Dangerfield a birthmark there, or anywhere else—the proverbial strawberry-mark on the arm, or mole on the neck, or anything of that sort?"

"The line you saw was a scar—the scar of a wound that came pretty near ending her life. On the voyage out to India her nurse let her fall out of her arms; she struck the blunt end of a spike, and gave herself a horrible gash just above the temple. I saw the scar a hundred times; it wasn't very disfiguring, and she never tried to conceal it. A white, triangular scar, that used to turn livid red when she got angry."

O'Donnell listened thoughtfully.

"Humph!" he said, "a scar like that it would be impossible ever to obliterate, even had she lived to be eighty."

"Quite impossible; but why?"

"Oh, only idle curiosity, of course. I noticed the mark, and it set me wondering what it might be. He paused a moment, his eyes on the ground, his brows knit in a thoughtful frown; then he looked up and spoke again, quite abruptly: "You told me, Sir Peter, she died in the house of a man named Otis, I think—a doctor, who afterward removed to London. Do you know if this man still lives?"

"I know nothing about him, but there is no reason to suppose he does not."

"Was his Christian name Henry?"

Sir Peter paused a moment, and thought.

"It was Henry," he answered. "I remember now. Henry Otis, that was his name."

"Was he tall, spare, very light-haired, very sallow complexion, and a stoop?"

"Yes, he was. O'Donnell, have you seen him? You describe him exactly."

"I think I have. And she died in his house, and was buried from it, you say? How long after did he leave Castleford for London?"

"I don't remember exactly—some months, I think. There were people who said he had fallen in love with Katherine, and was miserable here after her death. She

was buried from his house, and he erected that stone to her memory. Then he took his mother and went up to London."

"He and his mother lived alone?"

"They did."

"They kept a servant, I suppose?"

Sir Peter looked at him wonderingly.

"I suppose they did; it was not his mother who opened the door for me when I went there. O'Donnell, what are you driving at?"

"I'll tell you presently. If the servant who lived with them at the time of Katherine Dangerfield's death be still alive, it strikes me I should like to see that servant. One question more, Sir Peter, on another subject. Do you know a place some three miles from here—a dismal, lonely sort of house called Bracken Hollow?"

"Certainly I know Bracken Hollow." His voice dropped to a whisper, and he glanced half-fearfully around. "Who in Castleford does not? Dismal and lonely! I should think so. Bracken Hollow is a haunted house."

"Who lives at Bracken Hollow?"

"An old woman, named Hannah Gowan. She was Katherine Dangerfield's nurse in her youth, and Sir John pensioned her off, and gave her Bracken Hollow."

"Whew—w—w—w!" O'Donnell's low, shrill whistle pierced the quiet air. "Katherine Dangerfield's nurse! By George! that accounts——" he stopped.

Sir Peter looked at him, all his never-ending suspicions and fears aroused.

"Accounts for what?"

O'Donnell halted in his slow walk, and laid his hand confidentially on the shoulder of the baronet, and looked calmly down into the baronet's little wizen face.

"Sir Peter," he said gravely, "a light is beginning to dawn upon me; the mysteries are lifting slowly, but, I think, surely. I can't tell you what I think, what I suspect; I hardly can tell myself yet. All is confused—all is stranger than I can say; but as in a glass, darkly! I begin to understand—to see the end. Wait—give me time. As surely as we both live, this strange mystery shall be sifted to the bottom, and the ghost of Scarswood,

the ghost of Bracken Hollow exorcised. Now, I am going away by myself to think."

He turned and strolled away, leaving the petrified little baronet standing under the lime-trees, the picture of dazed and helpless astonishment.

The first room the young Irishman passed was the the library; its windows stood wide open on the lawn; it looked cool, and dark, and deserted—a suitable place to think. He stepped in, let the sea-green curtains fall again, flung himself into a chair, his hands still deep in his pockets, his brow still knit in that reflective frown.

The room had seemed very dark, coming in from the glare of the sunset. As after five minutes he lifted his eyes from the carpet, he found that it was not dark. More, he found that he was not alone—the library had another occupant—that occupant was Miss Herncastle—Miss Herncastle asleep.

He drew near—he stooped over the sleeping form; very gently he lifted the black waves of hair that covered forehead and temple. A full and noble brow he saw it was those bands of dead-dark hair hid. Lifted off, it altered her wonderfully, made her ten times more like the portrait of the dead girl. He glanced at the temple.

Good God! yes, there was the livid triangular scar Sir Peter Dangerfield had described, just above the temple.

He let the hair drop—he absolutely reeled for a second, and grasped a chair. He stood there thunderstruck, spellbound, looking down at her, helpless to do anything else.

Something in the magnetism of that strange, fascinated gaze must have pierced even the mists of slumber. Without sound of any kind to disturb her, the eyelids quivered, lifted, and Miss Herncastle, wide-awake in a second, looked up from the sofa into Redmond O'Donnell's face.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROSE O'DONNELL'S SECRET.

For a moment—for an hour, it seemed to him—not a word was spoken. His dazed eyes never left her; he stood almost like a man stunned.

She rose up on her elbow, returning his gaze. What did his face, its sudden pallor, showing white even under the golden bronze of his skin, tell her? Something in his eyes cowed her strangely—fascinated her also.

She rose slowly up to a sitting posture and spoke, answering that fixed look:

"What is it?" she asked.

The sound of her voice broke the spell.

He drew a long breath and was himself again. In dealing with this woman, who could be too subtle and too deceiving?

"I have been experimenting in animal magnetism, Miss Herncastle," he said coolly; "in other words, trying if my will, my mesmeric power, could master you. I found you asleep—sound asleep—after your walk, and I stood and looked at you and willed you to awake. You obeyed. A liberty on my part, perhaps, but the temptation was irresistible. You possess a very powerful will of your own, Miss Herncastle; that mine can command it is no small triumph for me."

Something very like a flush passed over the perfect pallor of Miss Herncastle's face.

"Captain O'Donnell," she said, and there was a strange, weary, wistful pathos in her voice, "I asked you before—I ask you again—what have I ever done to you that you should be the one to hunt me down?"

Something in her tone—something in her look—dreary, forlorn—touched him in spite of himself.

"And I answer again—nothing, Miss Herncastle. I have no wish to turn amateur detective, believe me. But Sir Arthur Tregenna is my friend—I cannot see him duped without raising my voice to warn. You have brought discord and wretchedness enough to this house already; go and leave it, satisfied with what you have done. All that I suspect I shall keep to myself; and I suspect a great deal. But go; leave Sir Arthur to his duty—leave Sir Peter free from ghosts, and if it is in my power to aid or help you in any way, command me. But all this plotting, this working in the dark, must end, or else——" He paused.

"Or else it is war between you and me—is that it, Captain O'Donnell? Do your worst—spy upon me when

and how you choose, overhear all I say, suspect every word and action, and repeat everything to Sir Arthur Tregenna. I tell you it will be labor lost—he loves me. You hear, most gallant of Irishmen, most courtly of gentlemen—loves me, and as surely as I will it, will one day make me his wife. Tell him this also, if you choose—it will be in keeping with the rest. And I thought you a soldier and a gentleman! Let me pass, Captain O'Donnell—I have no more to say to you."

Once again it flashed out, the passion he had awakened within her, the jealousy he had aroused, and he never saw it. He saw only an angry and utterly base woman at bay, and his heart hardened toward her.

"In one moment," he said. "Believe me, I have little wish to prolong this interview. I have given you your one chance, and you have refused it. It shall be no fault of mine if Sir Arthur Tregenna works his own lifelong misery. I warn you fairly—for his sake, for Lady Cecil's, for Sir Peter's. I shall show you to them as you are. One moment more, Miss Herncastle, if you please. In overhearing your remark, in passing out of the churchyard, I also heard you say, 'Marie de Lansac is here.' Now, what has Marie de Lansac—Rose O'Donnell—to do with that man or you?"

Her hand was on the handle of the door. She stopped and turned to him, a smile of malicious triumph on her face and in her eyes.

"Ah!" she said, "you heard that, did you? What is Marie de Lansac to me? Captain O'Donnell, you accuse me of the guilt of having secrets and mysteries in my life. I wonder if I am alone in that? I wonder if Sir Peter Dangerfield knew every episode in my lady's career? I wonder if her papa and her friends are free to read every page in Lady Cecil's life? I wonder if Redmond O'Donnell knows every incident connected with his pretty, gentle sister's New Orleans existence? What woman tells father, lover, brother—all? Not one among all the millions on earth. Captain O'Donnell, answer me this: Did you ever hear from your sister's lips the name of Gaston Dantree?"

"Gaston Dantree." The name had a familiar sound to him, but at that moment he could not tell where he had

heard it—certainly not from his sister. The derisive eyes of the governess were upon him; he could not understand the mocking triumph of their glance.

"I have heard that name," he answered, "but not from Rose."

"I thought not. Then I tell no tales. I keep my own secrets, and let others keep theirs. Captain O'Donnell, the dressing-bell rings. I wish you good afternoon."

After dinner Rose O'Donnell took a seat in the recess of the bay window. Here Redmond sought her and opened the conversation by asking:

"How much longer do you propose remaining in Sussex, Rose?"

"Remain? I——" She faltered and stopped. "Are you anxious to go, Redmond? If so, of course——"

"I have no wish to go until the object that brought you here is an object accomplished, Rose. That you have some object in insisting upon coming to this particular place I am quite certain. More, perhaps I can partly guess what that object is."

The rose-hued netting dropped in her lap, her great, dark eyes dilated in sudden terror.

"Redmond!"

"You have not chosen to make me your confidant, Rose, and I ask for no one's secrets, not even yours. Still, you will permit me to ask one question: Did you ever know Gaston Dantree?"

Suddenly, sharply, without warning, the question came upon her. One faint, wailing cry, then her hands flew up and covered her face.

"I am answered," he said; "you have known Gaston Dantree. He was a Louisianian—you knew him in New Orleans. He disappeared here; at Castleford the last trace of him is to be found. Was it to discover that trace you came and brought me here? Look up, Rose," he said sternly, "and answer me."

She feared as well as loved him. Habitually he was very gentle with her, with all women, but let that stubborn sense of right and wrong of his be roused and he became as iron. Her hands dropped at his stern command, her poor, pale face, all drawn and white with terror and trouble, looked piteously up at its judge.

"Tell me the truth," he ordered, his lips set. "It is too late for further prevarication. You knew this man?"

"I knew him!"

"In New Orleans, before he came here to court and desert, like the craven-hearted dastard he was, Katherine Dangerfield?"

"Yes."

His lips set themselves harder under his long mustache, his blue eyes looked stern as steel.

"I said I asked for no one's secrets, not even yours. I do, Rose. What was he to you?"

She drew away from him once again, hiding her shrinking face in her hands. A dry, tortured sob was her only answer. But her judge and arraigner never relented.

"Was he a lover of yours?"

She made a mute gesture of assent.

"A false one, of course?"

"Heaven help me—yes."

A pause; then——

"Rose, did Monsieur De Lansac know?"

"He suspected. He never knew."

"Did he favor Dantree?"

"No; he forbade him the house."

"And you—you, Rose O'Donnell, stooped to meet him in secret—to make and keep assignations. You did this?"

"Redmond!" she cried, with a great gush, "why are you so hard, so bitter? Why do you judge me so harshly? I was very young; I did not know what distrust meant, and I—I—loved him with all my heart. He said he loved me, and I—oh, Redmond; it is nine years ago—I believed him. I was warned; others—older and wiser, read him aright—told me it was the prospective heiress of Monsieur De Lansac's millions he loved—not Rose O'Donnell. But I loved and trusted, and could not believe. I met him in spite of my grandfather's commands. I received his letters—to my shame I own it. Then our grandfather married—then Clarence was born, and I—learned the truth at last. It was all as they said—he was false, base, mercenary to the core, loved the heiress, not me, and he left me. Left me without a word, and came here to England. Still, without a word, he returned me my let-

ters and picture. Then—the next thing I heard of him—I saw the mournful story of Katherine Dangerfield in the English papers my grandfather received. From that time I have heard nothing—nothing. I should have told you, perhaps, but—it is not so easy a story to tell—the story of one's own folly and humiliation."

The soft, sad voice ceased; the pale, drooping face turned far away from him in the silvery dusk. But in his face there was little relenting, in his voice little softness, when he spoke.

"The folly of the past I could forgive; the folly of the present, no. That you took a girl's fancy for a man's handsome face, and were the dupe of his false words, might be overlooked—is very natural in a girl of sixteen. That a woman of five-and-twenty should still cling to the memory of so despicable a wretch, still pursue him, and drag me, in my ignorance of your secret, into that pursuit—that I cannot forgive."

He arose as he spoke, angry exceedingly, wounded, grieved inexpressibly. She seized his hand in a sort of desperation, and clung to it.

"Redmond, you—you don't understand. It is not that. I don't care for him; it is all I can do to pray to be kept from hating his memory, whether he be alive or dead. It is that—that I——" Her courage failed as she looked up into that iron face. "Redmond!" she cried; "who has been talking to you—who has told you this?"

"Miss Herncastle," he answered. "Your secret, it would seem, has all along been no secret to her. She bade me ask you two hours ago what you knew of Gaston Dantree."

"Miss Herncastle!" she could but just repeat the name in her ungovernable surprise.

"Miss Herncastle," he repeated, still very coldly. "If I were in your place, I think I should come to an understanding with that lady. It was against my will I ever came to England. If I had dreamed of your object, I certainly would never have set foot in it. But I trusted Rose O'Donnell. That is all over now—it is only one other lesson added to the rest. When your inquiries concerning Mr. Gaston Dantree are at an end, let me know, and we will depart for France."

Again he was turning away, hurt, angry, grieved beyond words to say. Again she caught his hand and held him fast.

"Redmond! brother—friend! Oh, my God, why will you judge me so hardly? I have deserved it, perhaps, but—you break my heart. If you knew all I have suffered, you might pity—you might forgive."

He withdrew his hand, and turned sternly away.

"I have told you—the past I could forgive easily; the present I cannot."

And then he was gone. For a moment she sat looking after him with eyes of passionate pleading. Then the pride of blood, latent in her, arose. He was hard, he was cruel, he was merciless. If he had ever loved, himself, or suffered, he would not be so pitiless to her. Lanty was wrong—neither Lady Cecil nor any other woman had ever touched his heart of granite.

She sat wounded—humbled—silent. Then all at once the recollection of Miss Herncastle flashed upon her. She had told him—she knew all. All! Rose O'Donnell turned white and cold from head to foot. Did Miss Herncastle know all?

She rose up hurriedly and looked down the lighted length of the spacious drawing-rooms. No; Miss Herncastle was nowhere to be seen. Should she seek her in her room? She stood for an instant irresolute. Squire Talbot espied her and turned to cross over. She saw him in time—flight was her only escape. She stepped through the open window and disappeared.

The tall trees of the lime walk stood up black in the ivory light of the moon.

Out from the shadow of the house some one stepped. It was the governess. Rose saw the tall figure in the moonlight, and, opening the window, she passed out on the lime walk.

Her brother's words demanded instant action, and she was resolved to learn all.

"Miss Herncastle!"

Rose O'Donnell's clear voice, ringing along the silence, came to the ear of the governess. She had reached the King's Oak, and was standing, a smile on her lips, on the very spot where Sir Peter had seen the ghost. She

turned at the sound of her name, the smile fading away, and confronted the speaker.

"You called, Miss O'Donnell?"

"I called, Miss Herncastle. I wish to speak a word to you. I will not detain you an instant," as the governess shivered ever so little in the soft night air. "Two hours ago you bade my brother ask me what I knew of Gaston Dantree. Miss Herncastle, in my turn I ask, what do you know?"

She looked more like her brother, as she spoke, than the governess had ever seen her. She came of a bold and brave race, and some of the fire of that race shone in her eyes now Miss Herncastle returned her gaze steadily.

"You really wish me to answer that question?"

"Certainly, or else I had not asked it."

"This!" the voice of the governess rose, her mouth grew set and stern—"this—that if Gaston Dantree be alive, you are Gaston Dantree's wife!"

CHAPTER IX.

KNIGHT AND PAGE.

It was a noticeable fact—noticed chiefly by Sir Arthur Tregenna and Squire Talbot—that neither Miss Herncastle nor Miss O'Donnell returned to the drawing-room. For Captain O'Donnell, he did not even perceive his sister's absence. He sat a little apart from the others, turning over a book of photographed celebrities, and never seeing one of them. One question was revolving itself over and over again in his brain until he was dizzy. Had Katherine Dangerfield died six years ago, or had she not? If she had not, who then lay in that quiet grave in the Methodist churchyard? If she had, who then, in the name of all that was wonderful, was Helen Herncastle? He thought till his brain was dazed.

Lady Cecil Clive, with Sir Arthur seated near her, glanced furtively across the length of the drawing-room at Redmond O'Donnell's dark, tired face and somber, blue eyes, and wondered, with a sort of awe, of what he could be thinking so intently and sternly.

"There is but one way," he said to himself moodily;

"a way I hate to take, and yet—for every one's sake—for Rose's, for Tregenna's, for Sir Peter's—it should be taken. If Katherine Dangerfield was buried six years ago, Katherine Dangerfield cannot be here. My mind is made up." He rose with the air of one who shakes off a burden. "I'll wonder no longer. No possible harm can come of it, and it will put an end to this juggling ghost-seeing—this mystification. I'll do it. And I'll begin the first thing to-morrow morning."

He took his leave and went home. It was a brilliant summer night, and, as he neared the fields, he stopped and looked suspiciously around. But if he looked for Miss Herncastle, no Miss Herncastle was to be seen. It was long past midnight when he reached the Silver Rose, but even then he did not go to bed. He lit a cigar, and sat down by the open window to smoke and think. The town was very quiet, the lights all out—the stars and Captain O'Donnell had the peace and beauty of the sweet July night all to themselves. He sat there, darkly thoughtful, for over an hour. When he threw himself on his bed he had thought it all out; his whole plan of action lay clear before him.

At ten o'clock next morning he began. He took his way through the town, to that pleasant cottage adjoining the churchyard wherein Katherine Dangerfield six years ago had died.

"I have warned her," he thought, "and she will not be warned. She must take the consequences now."

A family named Wilson resided in the cottage at present—that much he had ascertained at his inn. They had taken possession the very week in which Mr. Otis had left, and had been there ever since. Mrs. Wilson, a rosy little matron, answered the door in person, and ushered her military visitor at once into the parlor. Captain O'Donnell's business with Mrs. Wilson was very simple. He understood that the servant woman who had lived in the family of Mr. Otis six years ago was now in the service of Mrs. Wilson. His business was with that servant—could he see her a moment or two in private?

The little mistress of the cottage opened two bright brown eyes in surprise, but answered readily in the

affirmative. He meant Dorcas, of course—Dorcas had come to her with the house, and Dorcas was in the kitchen at present, and would wait upon the gentleman at once.

Mrs. Wilson went and Dorcas came—a stout, elderly woman, with an intelligent face.

"I wish to obtain a few particulars concerning the sudden death of a young lady in this house six years ago," the chasseur began, plunging into his subject at once. "You remember her, of course? Her name was Katherine Dangerfield."

Yes, Dorcas remembered perfectly well, remembered as though it were yesterday. She had come to the cottage late in the evening—a cold, dark winter evening it was—to see the sick young man, Mr. Dantree. Mr. Otis himself had let her in. The next thing she heard, half an hour later, was Mrs. Otis scream. Had rushed in. Miss Dangerfield was lying then on the sofa, white and still, and Doctor Graves said she was dead.

"You saw her dead?"

"Yes, poor dear, and a beautiful corpse she made, calm, and white, and peaceful, and looking more as though she were asleep than dead."

"How long was she kept here before she was buried?" the soldier asked.

"Only two days, sir, and she looked lovely to the last. I remember her well, lying in her coffin, with flowers all round her like marble or waxwork, and misses a-crying over her and master with a face like white stone. I saw it all, sir, saw the coffin lid screwed down; saw her carried out, and a fine, respectable funeral she had—all the gentry of the neighborhood, poor dear young lady."

"Humph!" Captain O'Donnell said, knitting his brows. Katherine Dangerfield had died, then, and Miss Herncastle had nothing whatever to do with her, in spite of all the astounding coincidences. "One question more, my good woman: how long after the funeral was it that Mr. Otis left this place for London?"

"About a month, sir—yes, just a month. I think they would have gone sooner, but for the unexpected arrival of his cousin, the sick young lady from Essex."

Captain O'Donnell had risen to go. At these last words he suddenly sat down again.

"The sick young lady from Essex? Ah! I think this may be what I want to hear. When did you say the sick young lady came?"

"On the very identical night of the funeral, sir, and most unexpected. I had gone to bed, and misses, she came to my room next morning before I was up, all white and in a tremble, and says to me, 'Dorcas, get up at once and heat water for a bath;' and then she sat down in a chair, looking fit to drop. I asked her if any one was sick, and she said yes, a young lady who had come in the night, a niece of hers from Essex, and who was going to stop with them a few days. She begged me to keep it a secret. The young lady was weaklike in her intellect, and they would be obliged to confine her to her room. I promised not to speak of it, for misses she looked trembling and frightened to death almost. And so she was all the time the strange young lady was in the house."

"How long was that?"

"Not quite a fortnight, sir; and a sight of bother she made—all her meals took up to her room, and misses a-trotting up and down all day long, a-waiting upon her herself."

"What was she like—this young lady?"

Dorcas shook her head.

"That I couldn't tell, sir. I never laid eyes on her, leastwise except once. Master and misses they kept waiting on her, all day long, and misses she slept with her in the same room at night."

"But you saw her once?"

"Yes, sir, but it was by an accident, and at night. I didn't see her face. She never stirred out all day long, and at night I used to hear sounds of footsteps, and doors softly opening and shutting. One night I watched. I heard the house door shut softly, and directly after I espies master walking in the back garden with a lady on his arm. It was a cloudy sort of a night, and I couldn't see her very plainly—I couldn't see her face at all. She was tall, and dressed in dark clothes, and—but this was only a notion of mine—if Miss Dangerfield

hadn't been dead and buried, I should have said the height and the figure were like hers."

The blood rose dark and red over the sun-browned face of the African soldier. For an instant his breath seemed fairly taken away.

"Well?" he said, in a tense sort of whisper.

Dorcas looked at him in surprise.

"Well, sir," she said, "the very next night after that the sick young lady ran away. I don't know whether they had been keeping her against her will or not, but in the dead of night she ran away. When misses awoke next morning she found the bed empty, the door unlocked, and Miss Otis—they called her Miss Otis—gone. She screamed out like one crazy, and ran down in her nightclothes to master's room. I saw him as he came out, and except when he looked at Miss Dangerfield dead in her coffin, I never saw him wear such a face; I declare it frightened me. He searched the house and the garden, but she was nowhere to be found. Then he set off for the station, and discovered—I heard him tell his mother so—that a tall young lady, dressed in black and closely veiled, had gone up to London by the very first train. That same day he got a telegraph despatch from London, and he went up at once. He came back in three days, looking dreadfully gloomy and out of spirits. His mother met him in the hall and said, 'Well, Henry, is she safe?' in a flurried sort of a way, and he pushed her before him into the parlor, and they had a long talk. Miss Otis never came back, and two weeks after master and mistress went up to town themselves for good. That's all, sir."

That day—Wednesday—passed very quietly; it was the treacherous lull that precedes all storms. Miss Herncastle kept her room; she was putting still a few finishing touches to that lovely page dress. Late on Wednesday evening came from town a large box addressed to Major Frankland; my lady and the governess alone knew that it contained Count Lara's costume. My lady was on her best behavior to her husband—go to the masquerade she was resolved, and brave all consequences. Sir Peter might never find it out, and if he did—well,

if he did, it would blow over, as other storms had blown over, and nothing would come of it.

There were others who judged differently. Some inkling of what was brewing, something of what Sir Peter had said, reached the ears of Lord Ruysland, and Lord Ruysland had ventured in the most delicate manner to expostulate with his wilful niece. The game was not worth the candle—the masquerade was not worth the price she might pay for it. Better humor Sir Peter and his old-fashioned prejudices and throw over Mrs. Everleigh.

Ginevra listened, her eyes compressing—a gleam of invincible obstinacy kindling in her eyes. She was one of those people whom opposition only doubly determined to have their way.

"That will do, Uncle Raoul. Your advice may be good, but I should think your three-score years' experience of this life had taught you nobody ever yet relished good advice. I'll go to the Everleigh party—I'll wear the page dress, and snap my fingers at Sir Peter Dangerfield. His threats, indeed! Poor little manikin! it's rather late in the day for him to play the rôle of Bluebeard. I shall go."

The earl shrugged his shoulders and gave it up. He never argued with a woman.

"Certainly you'll go, my dear—I knew perfectly well how useless remonstrance would be, but Cecil would have it. Go, by all means. Whatever happens I shall have done my duty. Let us hope Sir Peter may never hear it."

"Your duty! The Earl of Ruysland's duty!" his niece laughed contemptuously. "I wonder if all that paternal solicitude is for me or himself? If Sir Peter turns me out of Scarswood, you must follow, Uncle Raoul. The dress is made, and my promise given. I shall go to the masquerade."

Thursday came—that delusive quiet still reigned at Scarswood. When the afternoon train from London rushed into the Castleford station there appeared among the passengers Captain O'Donnell and Major Frankland; and placid and patrician, pacing the platform, the Earl of Ruysland.

"Ah, O'Donnell—back again. You don't know, I suppose, that your sister is quite indisposed. I regret to say such is the case—nervous attack or something vague of the sort. How do, Frankland? On your way to Scarswood? Permit me to accompany you there."

But the major drew back in some trifling embarrassment. He wasn't going to Scarswood this afternoon; to-morrow—ah—he intended to put in an appearance. Would his lordship be kind enough not to mention having seen him at all?

The earl's serene blue eyes were tranquilly fixed on the major's face.

"I understand," he answered, "you are down on the quiet—Sir Peter is to hear nothing of it until after the ball? Is that your little game, dear boy? You see, I know all about it, and my age and my relationship to Lady Dangerfield give me the right to interfere. Now, my dear fellow, that masquerade affair must be given up."

Major Frankland at first laughed, but when the matter was put to him in its true light he agreed to absent himself from the ball, and forthwith proceeded to Scarswood, where he left a note of regret for Lady Dangerfield with Miss Herncastle.

The night of the ball Lady Dangerfield pleaded headache and retired to her room early. Here she donned the page's costume with the help of Miss Herncastle, and made her exit by the back stair to a shrubbery, where a stout cob waited to carry my lady on the road to ruin.

Among all the brilliant-robed throng at Mrs. Everleigh's there was not one who excited more attention than the little glittering page, Kaled. But where was Lara? An hour had passed since the page's arrival, but the page's master was absent still. And under the silken mask an angry flush was rising at length over the page's face.

What could keep Major Frankland? She flung herself into a seat as she asked the question—alone for a brief moment—the first since the ball began. "Did he not come down, after all? How dare he disappoint me so? And how absurd I must look—the page without the knight. I'll never——"

She stopped—some one had approached behind her unseen—a voice spoke low in her ear.

"The Chief of Lara has returned again. Look up—my faithful Kaled—my prince and paragon of pages—and welcome your knight and master!"

"The Chief of Lara," in the picturesque dress of a Spanish cavalier, stood behind her, his mask over his face. But for one instant she had not recognized Jasper Frankland's well-known tones. "No—don't reproach me, Ginevra, as I see you are going to do, and as I know I deserve. I couldn't help it—only just got down—serious illness of my grandfather—ought to be by his bedside at this instant. Ah—a redowa—my favorite dance. Come, Kaled, let me look at you. A gem of a dress, indeed—it is exquisite. Come."

He whirled her away, but for the first time in her experience the major's step and hers did not agree. For the first moment or two they absolutely could not dance together—then Count Lara seemed to catch it, and they whirled away to the admiration of all beholders.

"What is the matter with you to-night, Jasper?" Lady Dangerfield asked half-pettishly. "Your voice sounds strange, you don't dance as you used—and—and something about you, I don't know what, looks unfamiliar. Take off your mask, sir, and let me see you."

"Not likely. A page must never presume to command his master. Rest assured that I am I, and at supper we will unmask, and become the cynosure of all eyes. Ginevra, your dress is absolutely perfect—there is nothing to equal it here to-night."

A passing domino caught the half-whispered words, and paused to watch them. From that moment, wherever the knight and page went the black domino was sure to follow.

It was an indescribably brilliant party, there was hardly a moment's cessation in the whirl of dancing—the hours flew by like minutes—and Lara and his page never parted company for an instant, whether they waltzed or walked, whether they sought the cool stillness of half-lit balconies and boudoirs, or plunged into the whirl of maskers. And still all unnoticed—stealthily and sure as

fate itself, the black domino followed and watched, and bided his time.

They wandered into a conservatory at last, filled with the moonlight of shaded lamps, where the music came faint and far off, and tall tropic plants reared their rich heads far above.

"How hot it is—how noisy they are," Kaled murmured, sinking into a moss-green seat. "I must take off my mask—I shall look as red as a milkmaid when we unmask. In the ten minutes that intervene between this and supper, let me try and get cool if I can."

He stooped over her with the whispered imbecility he knew was expected of him, and fanned her with a palm-leaf.

"Shall I fetch you a water-ice?" he asked; "it will help you to feel cool. You will have it eaten before we go to supper."

She assented languidly. Her mask lay in her lap, and, watching her with glittering eyes, the spectral domino stood in shadow of the palms. Count Lara's garments brushed him as he went by—but Lara's eyes had noticed him from the first. In a second Count Lara had vanished. My lady, looking flushed and handsome in her boyish travesty, fanned herself in the cool shade of a myrtle-tree. And behind the palms the domino waited.

Both waited for what never came—the return of Count Lara.

The moments passed on—the summons to supper was given—the masqueraders were crowding to the supper-room, and still Count Lara did not appear. In a storm of wrath and impatience, my lady lingered—twice to-night he had made her wait—what did he mean?

She rose at length when patience had ceased to be a virtue, and taking the proffered arm of an ogre, made her way to the supper-tables. The laughter and excitement were at their wildest—everybody was unmasked—everybody was making the most astounding discoveries—everybody was present—everybody but the exasperating Count of Lara.

No, far or near, he was nowhere to be seen. A dozen voices called his name; no one could tell what had be-

come of him. Infuriated, mystified, my lady looked up and down. What was it she saw that made her leap from her seat with a low cry of fear, that drove the blood from her blanched cheeks? She saw—for one instant, amid the crowd, the face—not of Major Frankland, but of Sir Peter Dangerfield, looking at her. For one instant only, then it, too, disappeared.

* * * * * * *

Captain O'Donnell went to his quarters at the Silver Rose and was closeted for half an hour with Lanty Lafferty and a slouching, cockney-looking individual, named Joggins.

That night the three met by the grave of Katherine Dangerfield. The men proceeded to turn up the clay, and finally the coffin lay uncovered.

"Lift to the surface," said Redmond, in a low voice.

Lanty and the cockney raised the coffin between them —the damp clay clinging to it, making it weighty—and placed it at Redmond O'Donnell's feet.

At last! He drew one long, hard, tense breath—his eyes gleamed. "Open it," he said, in a composed sort of voice, and Mr. Joggins produced a screw-driver, and set to work once more. The screws, one by one, were removed—the last lay in the palm of Joggins' hand—nothing remained but to lift the lid and see either the moldering remains of Katherine Dangerfield, or——

He made a sign, Joggins raised it, all three bent forward to look. There was a simultaneous exclamation from all as they bent again to reassure themselves. The late-rising moon, which had been struggling through the mists of coming morning, shone suddenly for a moment full upon the ghastly object before them, and lit it brightly up.

They saw what Redmond O'Donnell had expected to see—an empty coffin.

CHAPTER X.

"THE LENGTH OF HIS TETHER."

That fateful July night, destined to be marked forever in the calendars of Lady Dangerfield and Captain Redmond O'Donnell, was fated likewise to be marked with a red cross in that of Sir Arthur Tregenna.

"Sir Arthur Tregenna has run the length of his tether," Lord Ruysland had calmly said to himself, while pacing the Castleford station; "it is high time to pull him short up."

For Lord Ruysland to decree was to act. This very night Sir Arthur should receive his "short pull up."

What he said at the interview must have spurred Sir Arthur to instant action, for after leaving Lord Ruysland he went at once to the tiny boudoir where he expected to find Lady Cecil.

The curtains were only partly drawn, and seated within, her hands folded listlessly in her lap, her eyes fixed on the dim starlight, he saw the earl's daughter. He swept back the curtain, and stood, tall and dark, by her side.

Her half-uttered exclamation died away. Before she could speak one word he was saying what he had come to say—hurriedly—incoherently—his face all set and stern, looking as unlike a lover as can well be conceived. She drew a little away from him, her clasped hands tightened over one another. She sat perfectly still and listened—a sort of scorn for him—a sort of scorn for herself—an utter weariness of everything, the only feelings she was conscious of. She listened with steady patience to the end.

"He was unworthy of her—infinitely unworthy; he esteemed and admired her with all his heart; it had been his dying father's wish—he had her father's consent. Would Lady Cecil Clive do him the honor to become his wife?"

She looked up at the last words, flushing red in the darkness.

"My father's consent," she repeated slowly. "Sir Arthur, tell me the truth. My father has been talking to you to-night? He has—oh! how shall I say it—he has ordered you to follow me here and say this?"

"On my sacred honor, no. I have been talking to your father—asking his permission to address you. I have said before I am unworthy; if you refuse me, I shall feel I am receiving the punishment I richly merit. If you accept me, it will be the study of my life to make you happy."

He stood and waited for her answer. "His punishment," she repeated, with inward scorn. "Ah, yes, Sir Arthur, my refusal would be punishment not overhard to bear. He asks me, hoping—yes, hoping—though he may not acknowledge it himself, that I will refuse, and I —I must say yes."

She must say yes—her whole future, her father's, depended on it. She could not brave his anger—she could not live this life forever—what would become of her if she refused?"

All at once Torryglen rose before her, and Redmond O'Donnell's face, bright, eager, loving. Yes, in those days he had loved her. He had changed—she was no more to him now than her cousin Ginevra, and while life lasted, she must love him. No time to shirk the truth now, she loved Redmond O'Donnell, and this man who stood beside her asking her to be his wife loved Helen Herncastle. What a miserable, travestied world it was, what wretched hypocrites and cheats they all were!

Why had she not been born a farmer's daughter to hold life with a wholesome, hearty interest, to love her husband and be loved in return?

"You do not answer," Sir Arthur said. "I have lost a hold on your respect and esteem, as I deserve. Lady Cecil, will you not speak, at least, and let me hear my fate?"

"What is it you wish me to say?" she asked wearily, a touch of pain and impatience in her voice. "You ask me to be your wife, Sir Arthur Tregenna—you are a man of truth and honor—you have lost neither my respect nor my esteem. Tell me truly—truly—do you really wish me to say yes?"

"I really wish you to say yes. If you do not say it, then I leave England again in a month—for years—for life."

She drew her breath hard—she spoke with a sort of gasp.

"You will leave England! Then, there is no one else you will marry if——"

"There is no one else I will marry if you refuse—no one."

He said it resolutely—a hard, metallic ring in his tone, his lips set almost to pain.

"There is no one else I will marry—if you refuse me, I leave England. Once more, Lady Cecil, will you be my wife?"

"I—will be—your wife."

The words were spoken—her voice faltered—her face was steadily turned to the still moonlight. It was over. He took her hand and lifted it to his lips. How chill its touch, but scarcely so chill as the lips that touched it. Then it was drawn away and she stood up.

"I leave here for Cornwall, as you know, to be absent two—almost three weeks. To-morrow, before I go, I shall speak to Lord Ruysland. Whatever I have been in the past—this much, Lady Cecil, you may believe of me—that you will ever be first in my thoughts from this hour—that I will make you happy if the devotion of a life can do it."

"I believe you," she held out her hand of her own accord now, "and trust and honor you with all my heart. It is late, and I am tired. Good night, Sir Arthur."

"Good night, Lady Cecil."

She left him standing there and went up to her own room. What a farce it had all been!—she half-smiled as she thought of it, love-making without a word of love, a proposal of marriage without a spark of affection between them. They were like two puppets in a marionette comedy playing at being in love. But it was all over—her father was saved—she would make a brilliant marriage, after all. She had accepted him, and fulfilled her destiny. Her name was written in the book of fate—Lady Cecil Tregenna. .

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THE MASQUERADE.

By the first train on the morning following the discovery in the churchyard, Mr. Joggins, in a third-class car, went back to London. By the same early train, in a first-class compartment, Captain Redmond O'Donnell went up to London, also.

Captain O'Donnell on arriving at the metropolis drove to a cottage at St. John's Wood, and inquired for Doctor Otis. The physician was not at home, but at the captain's desire he was ushered into the little parlor where Mrs. Otis, a little old lady, sat placidly knitting.

"You wanted to see me, sir." The knitting was suspended for a moment, as she looked curiously and admiringly up at the tall figure and handsome face of the Chasseur d'Afrique. "Pray come in and take a seat."

"Thanks, madam. It was your son I desired to see, but in his absence I have no doubt it will do equally well to say what I have come to say to you. Mr. Otis is in the country, your servant tells me—that means the town of Castleford, in Sussex, does it not?"

Her knitting dropped in her lap—the little old lady gave a gasp. He saw at once he had guessed the truth.

"I see I am right," he said quietly. "I have come direct to-day from Castleford, Sussex, myself. On the occasion of your son's last visit to that place I believe I chanced to see him. It was in the cemetery; you recollect the little Methodist cemetery, no doubt—just outside the town and adjoining your former residence. Yes, I see you do. I saw him in the cemetery talking to a lady by appointment, I judge; rather an odd place, too, for a tryst, by the way. The lady was Miss Helen Herncastle. Do you know her, Mrs. Otis?"

Again Mrs. Otis gave a sort of gasp, her pleasant, rosy, motherly face growing quite white. There were no words needed here—her face answered every question. He felt a species of compunction for alarming her as he saw he was doing, but there was no help for it.

"You know Miss Herncastle?" he said, not without a smile at her evident terror; "and are interested in her welfare. Your son did her great service once, and is her nearest and most confidential friend still. It is of Miss Herncastle I have come to London to speak, knowing that you and Mr. Otis have her welfare at heart. She must leave Scarswood, and at once, or else—or else, painful as my duty may be, Sir Peter Dangerfield shall know the whole truth."

The knitting dropped on the floor—little Mrs. Otis rose to her feet pale and trembling.

"Who are you, sir?" she cried, in a sort of whisper. "Who are you?"

"My name is Redmond O'Donnell."

She uttered a low, terrified exclamation—then in frightened silence sank back into her chair. Yes, she recognized the name—had heard all about him, and now sat pale and trembling with nervous dread, looking at him with wild, scared eyes.

"I am very sorry to frighten and agitate you in this way, my dear Mrs. Otis," he said, speaking very gently, "and—if Miss Herncastle will listen to reason—there is really nothing to be frightened about. But one thing or other she must do—leave Scarswood, or tell the truth."

"The truth?"

"That she is Katherine Dangerfield—not lying in Castleford churchyard, but alive and in the flesh. You see, I know all—all."

She sat looking at him, pale, helpless, speechless with fear and amaze.

"I know all," O'Donnell repeated. "That what all took for death was merely a trance, and that your son alone knew it. Knowing it he allowed her to be buried, and that same night secretly had the coffin opened, and its living inmate removed. He restored her to life and consciousness. You kept her hid in your house. She passed for Miss Otis, and was never seen by any one but yourself and your son. At night, when all was asleep, she took her airing in your garden, and after remaining a fortnight, until perfectly restored, she ran away. She went to America—she became an actress, made money, and returned to England. She had sworn

vengeance upon Sir Peter Dangerfield, and all these years had never faltered in her purpose. She made her way into his family as governess, and has nearly driven him out of the few senses he possesses, by playing ghost. It is a daring game she is carrying out. She is a bold woman, indeed. That Katherine Dangerfield and Helen Herncastle are one and the same, no one but myself knows or suspects. There is the grave where they saw her buried, the tombstone with its false inscription, to stagger them. I alone know—I know, Mrs. Otis. Shall I tell you how? I have done what your son did—I opened the grave—I opened the coffin and found—it empty. No moldering remains—no shroud—no ghastly skull and bones, and dust and ashes, but a clear and empty coffin. How I have discovered the rest does not matter. I know the whole truth. I am prepared to prove it. Miss Herncastle must speak before this week ends, or leave Scarswood—that is my ultimatum."

He arose. "I see that I have distressed you, Mrs. Otis—alarmed you—and I regret having done so. There is no occasion for alarm, however. Miss Herncastle has only to drop her masquerade and come forward in her true character, and I am ready and willing to become her friend instead of her enemy. But I will not stand by and see this deception go on. I wish you good afternoon. Here is my card—my London address is on the back; I shall remain in town three or four days. If Mr. Otis returns during that time, I shall be happy to see him."

Captain O'Donnell waited impatiently during the four ensuing days, but he waited in vain. If Mr. Henry Otis had returned to town, he did not call; and, disgusted and desperate, on the evening of the fifth he returned once more to Castleford.

He presented himself at Scarswood at once. He had not seen his sister for a week. It was close upon eight o'clock, and the silver gray of the summer evening was deepening into twilight as he walked up the avenue. The flutter of a white dress caught his eye amid the dark-green depths of fern; a tall, slender shape, with bright, hazel eyes, was slowly pacing the terrace alone. It was Lady Cecil. A soft mass of rose-pink cashmere, silk, and down, wrapped her. She held a letter in her

hand which she read as she walked. And even in that "dim religious light" O'Donnell saw, or fancied, that the fair pale face had grown paler and graver than ever he had seen it, in those five past days.

"Lady Cecil."

He lifted his hat and stood before her. She had not heard him until he spoke. A faint, tremulous flush rose up over the sensitive face, as she turned and gave him her hand.

"Captain O'Donnell! and just as we all began to give you up for lost. I am glad you have come—I have been wishing for you unspeakably. Do you know that Rose is ill? Something is preying on her mind—something which Miss Herncastle alone knows. Oh, that dreadful Miss Herncastle! Why did she ever enter this house? Captain O'Donnell, we are in trouble—terrible trouble—and she is the cause of it all. Do you know that she is gone?"

"Gone!"

"Been dismissed—discharged—sent away in disgrace. It is the strangest thing—the most wickedly malicious; and whatever her object could have been puzzles us all."

"Lady Cecil, you puzzle me. What new enormity has Miss Herncastle been guilty of?"

"You do well to call it enormity. She has parted Sir Peter Dangerfield and his wife—for life, I greatly fear."

He had been walking by her side—he stopped and looked at her now. He had delayed too long—he had shown her his cards and let her win the game. He had thought to spare her, and the mischief was done.

"Parted Sir Peter and his wife! Do I hear you aright, my dear Lady Cecil?"

"It sounds incredible, does it not? Nevertheless, it is true. You remember the masquerade at Mrs. Everleigh's last Thursday—that most miserable masquerade? Ginevra would insist upon going with Major Frankland as the Page Kaled—he as the Knight Lara. Sir Peter hates Mrs. Everleigh—he abhors masquerades and male costumes for women. Of course, he was right and Ginevra was wrong, but his very opposition made her more resolute to go. He told her if she went she should never return, that she should not live under his roof and

disgrace it. Ginevra defied him; but in her heart, she owns now, she was afraid, and ready to draw back. But that fatal Miss Herncastle would not let her. She had suggested the costumes, made Ginevra's, and used every persuasion to induce her to defy Sir Peter—deceive him, rather, and go. Ginevra yielded. She wrote a note at the dictation of the governess, to Major Frankland, in London, telling him of Sir Peter's opposition, asking him to come secretly down, remain at one of the inns, and go from thence to the ball. My poor cousin cannot even keep her own secrets, and she told me. I said everything I could think of to shake her resolution, but in vain. Finally I told papa in despair, and made him waylay the train at the station. You remember—he met you that same afternoon. He talked to Major Frankland, and the major finally agreed to give up the ball. Ginevra, of course, would not dream of going without him. But he insisted upon seeing her, and telling her with his own lips. Unfortunately we were all at Morecambe at an archery-party, and when he reached Scarswood he found only Miss Herncastle. He wrote a note explaining all; told her to have his masquerade dress returned, and left her. That note Miss Herncastle destroyed—she owns it; and, Captain O'Donnell—it seems almost incredible—she went to the masquerade instead of Major Frankland, and in his dress! The major is short, the governess is tall—she managed to make the Lara costume fit her. No one ever heard of such a thing before. You will scarcely be able to believe it."

"I can believe a great deal of Miss Herncastle. She is a wonderful woman!"

"A wonderful woman, indeed—it is to be hoped there are few like her," Lady Cecil responded indignantly; "and yet, though something seemed to warn me against her—she had a sort of fascination for me from the first. Well, Captain O'Donnell, it happened in this way: We returned from the archery fête; Ginevra pretended headache and retired to her room. All the while Sir Peter was on the watch. Miss Herncastle dressed her—a flyman from Castleford was in waiting, and he took her to Mrs. Everleigh. The governess had managed to secrete the Lara dress in her room, and the moment Lady

Dangerfield was gone, she rapidly dressed herself, and walked—actually walked from Scarswood to Mrs. Everleigh's house. Sir Peter, in spite of their precautions, had seen his wife depart, and followed immediately. At Mrs. Everleigh's he procured a black domino, and in that disguise, and masked, of course, he watched the page. The knight arrived in due time—rather late, perhaps, and neither Ginevra, dancing or talking to him, or Sir Peter watching, deemed it was other than the major."

"Well?" O'Donnell said curtly.

"Supper came, and under plea of going for an ice, Count Lara disappeared. Ginevra had to go down on the arm of another gentleman. At supper there was the usual universal unmasking, and the first face poor Ginevra saw was that of Sir Peter. Imagine her feelings! And the major nowhere to be seen. A moment after, Sir Peter disappeared, and my unfortunate cousin, half-dead with fear, made her way from the supper-room and the house, and reached home in the fly, the most pitiable object you ever saw. Her first question was for her husband—her first impulse to throw herself at his feet and implore his forgiveness. But he was not here—he has not been here since."

"Not here since?"

"No, Captain O'Donnell. If he had come home and raged and stormed, there might have been some hope—now I fear there is none. He is in Castleford, and his London solicitor is with him, stopping at the Scarswood Arms. He refuses to see his wife—he will never see her again, he says, as long as he lives."

"And how was it all discovered? Did Miss Herncastle confess at once?"

"Miss Herncastle has not confessed at all. In some way she reached Scarswood before Ginevra—she must have had a conveyance waiting, and was one of the first to receive her in her ordinary dress. The tumult poor Ginevra made aroused the house. In the cold gray of the morning we all—papa among the rest—gathered about her. She told her story in an incoherent way. Papa listened in amazement. 'Frankland,' he said. 'Frankland at the ball!—impossible! I myself saw him depart for London by the Parliamentary train at six-

twenty last evening. Frankland is in London.' He was positive, Ginevra was positive. The end of the matter was he telegraphed to Major Frankland in London—was he there or had he been at the ball? The answer came at once—he had not been at the ball, was then in London, and would run down at once. He did so, and then the murder was out. 'Had she not got his note?' 'What note?' 'The explanatory note given to Miss Herncastle.' 'Certainly not.' Miss Herncastle was summoned and confronted with the indignant major. 'What had she done with his note?' And Miss Herncastle looked him full in the face, and told him she had destroyed it."

"Did she say why?"

"She said—and you should have heard how coolly—that she thought it a pity Lady Dangerfield should be deprived of the ball, and of wearing the dress upon which she had set her heart, for a jealous whim of Sir Peter's and a prudish whim of the major's. She destroyed the note, and allowed Lady Dangerfield to go and enjoy herself. Who, then, had personated the major—herself? But on this subject Miss Herncastle was mute—as obstinate as Sir Peter himself. The Lara dress was found packed in its box in the major's room, and the governess refused to confess or deny anything. They might suspect what they chose—accuse her of anything they liked. If they could not prove their charges, they had better be silent—she would admit nothing. And she would not. Ginevra flew into a terrible passion and ordered her out of the house, and she went—without a word."

O'Donnell drew a long breath.

"By George!" he said, "here is a mare's nest. And where has she gone, Lady Cecil?"

"To London—three days ago. Before she left, she had an interview with your sister, since when Rose has been unable to leave her room. And Ginevra is in hysterics in hers. I never saw papa so worried—so annoyed in all my life before. He says Miss Herncastle is Satan himself in crinoline, and that all her mischief is not done yet."

"I agree with his lordship. And her champion—her admirer of other days, the chivalrous Cornishman—

where is he that he does not break a lance in favor of this persecuted lady?"

The soft summer dusk might have hidden from any other than the keen blue eyes of O'Donnell the flush that rose up all over Lady Cecil's fair face.

"It is hardly a fitting time or subject for Captain O'Donnell's sarcasm," she answered coldly. "Sir Arthur Tregenna is in Cornwall. He left very early on the morning following the masquerade—before the news had spread."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Cecil—believe me, I sympathize with you, at least. Will you pardon me again, if I say I feel but very little for Lady Dangerfield. Her own disobedience has wrought her ruin—she has no one to blame but herself."

"That does not make it any easier to bear. But I know of old how little sympathy you have for human error. She may have done wrong, but she is suffering now, and suffering goes far to atone for sin."

She had grown white again—her face looked like marble in the faint, misty light. She was looking away from him as she spoke, a wistfulness, a passion in her brown eyes he could not understand.

"I dare say people who go through life as you have gone, neither loving nor hating very greatly, can afford to be cynical, and hard, and cold. You have never suffered yourself—nor erred, I suppose—how are you to understand or feel for your weaker fellow mortals who do? But, at least, I hope you will be able to descend from your tower of strength far enough to sympathize with your sister. Be gentle with her, Captain O'Donnell—at least, as far as you understand the word, for she is in trouble. Don't be too hard—your life is not all over—even you may learn what it is to suffer, before you die!"

She turned from him, and was gone—the graceful, willowy figure, the flashing hazel eyes. The passion in her voice—what did it mean? He watched her—an inexplicable look on his face—a hard sort of smile on his lips.

"Even you may learn what it *is* to suffer before you

die." He repeated her words inwardly, as he took his way to his sister's room. "Ah, Lady Cecil, you taught me that lesson thoroughly six years ago. I was a fool then—a fool now—and I fear the folly will go with me to my grave." He tapped at his sister's door. "It is I, Rose," his familiar voice said. "May I come in?"

He heard a stifled cry from within—a cry of terror, it sounded, and his heart smote him. Poor little Rose! Had it come to this—had he been hard and unfeeling with her, and taught her to fear instead of love him? With the remorseful thought still in his mind, the door opened and she stood before him.

CHAPTER XII.

"SIX YEARS TOO LATE."

Poor little Rose, indeed! In the dusk she came gliding forward, so unlike herself—so like a spirit—so wan, so wasted—that, with a shocked exclamation, he drew her to him, and looked down into her worn face.

"They told me you were ill, Rose, but not like this. If I had thought!—if I had known——"

She flung her arms round his neck, and hid her face on his shoulder.

"Don't, Redmond. Don't look—don't speak to me like that. I don't deserve it—I don't deserve any love or kindness from you. I have deceived you shamefully. You will despise me—you will hate me when I have told you all."

"Will I? I am not sure of that. When you have told me all, I think I shall still be sorry to see those hollow cheeks and sunken eyes and wasted hands. Shall I light the lamps, Rose, or——"

"No! no! no lights! such a wretch as I am should tell her story in the dark. Here, sit down in this chair, Redmond, and let me take this stool at your feet. At your feet, my fitting place."

"My dear Rose, a most ominous beginning. What must the story be like when the preface is so terrible? Have you not grown nervous and hysterical, and inclined to magnify mole-hills into mountains? Out with it,

Rose; I promise not to be too stern a father-confessor. It's the story, I suppose, about this fellow Dantree."

She had seated herself at his feet, her arms across his knee, her face lying upon it. He laid his hand very gently on her bowed, humbled head.

"Speak, Rose. I am sorry to see you have learned to fear me like this. If I was stern with you the other night, I ask you to forgive me now. If you and I may not trust each other, whom may we trust? I promise to be merciful. Is it about this fellow Dantree?"

"It is. Redmond, I ought to have told you that other night, but I am a coward—a weak, pitiful coward. They say a guilty conscience makes cowards of us all, and mine is a guilty conscience, indeed. For seven years I have kept the secret I tell you to-night. Redmond," a great gasp, "you asked me if Gaston Dantree was my lover, and I said yes. I should have told you the truth; he was more than my lover. He was my—husband."

The last word seemed to suffocate her. She crouched farther down as though shrinking almost from a blow. She had expected a great start—an exclamation of amaze and horror—either as hard to bear as a blow. Neither came. Dead silence fell. He sat perfectly still—a dark statue in the dark. Whatever look his face wore, she could not see. That pause lasted for perhaps ten seconds—ten hours it seemed to her. Then: "Your husband! This is a surprise. And for seven years you have been this scoundrel's wife?"

"For seven long, miserable years. Oh, brother, forgive me. I have done shamefully wrong—I have been a living lie—I have deceived the kindest grandfather—the dearest brother, but if you knew what I have suffered——"

That choking in her voice made her pause again. "And suffering goes far to atone for sin." He remembered Lady Cecil's soft, sad words of reproach, and again his caressing touch fell upon the bowed young head. It had been a blow to him, a blow to his love and his pride, and both were great, but his voice and touch were far more tender than she had ever known them for years.

"I can believe it," he said; "you have atoned for your

folly, indeed. Don't fear, Rose. I can only regret that you did not tell me long ago. Tell me now, at least—all."

She told him—in broken sentences—with bowed head, while the darkness of the August night deepened in the little room, the old story of a girl's love and folly—of "marrying in haste and repenting at leisure."

"I wasn't quite eighteen, and just home from my convent school when I met him first, with all a girl's foolish dreams of beauty, and love, and romance. He was very handsome—I have never seen such a face as his—with the dash, and ease, and grace of a man of the world. And if he had been a very vulcan of ugliness, his divine voice might have won my dreaming, sentimental girl's heart. The aroma of conquest hung about him—married ladies petted and spoiled him—young ladies raved of his *beaux yeux* and his Mario voice, and I—I fell in love with him in a reckless, desperate sort of way, as later, I suppose, poor Katherine Dangerfield did in this very house. I was Monsieur De Lansac's reputed heiress then, and just the sort of prize he was looking out for. Very young, very silly, not bad-looking, and the heiress of one or two million dollars—a prize even worthy his stooping to win. And—and Redmond, in these first days, I think he even liked me a little, too. My grandfather detested him—forbade him the house—forbade me to see or speak to him. Then began my wrong-doing—I did see him—I did speak to him—I loved him—you wouldn't understand if I told you how dearly, and—and—Redmond—I consented to a private marriage. He was afraid to lose Monsieur De Lansac's heiress, and I was afraid to lose him. He threatened to leave New Orleans and never return if I refused. I married him and for a little time was happy in a fool's paradise. Only for a little while, indeed. My grandfather, in the most unexpected and sudden manner, as you know, got married. Gaston was furious—no need to tell you how he stormed and raved, or the names he called Monsieur De Lansac. I received my first lesson in his real character then. That year he remained in New Orleans—then little Louis was born, and all his hopes were at an end. He might bid good-by to Monsieur De Lansac's great for-

tune. He came to me one night—we met in secret in the grounds—like a man beside himself with rage and disappointment. He accused me of being the cause of all; it was bad enough to be a beggar himself without being deluded into marrying a beggar. He bade me savagely keep our marriage a dead secret from the world. He was going to England, he said; if he retrieved his fortune there some day he might send for me; if he did not, why, I was still safe at Menadarva. That was our parting. I have never set eyes on him since.

"He went to England; he wrote me from London and gave me a London address—some publishers there. I answered, but received no second letter. I waited and wrote again—still no reply. Then I got desperate, the little pride I had left me rose up. I wrote for the last time. If he wished to be free, he was free as the wind; I would hold him or no man against his will. Only let him return my picture, and letters, and consider me as dead to him forever. I did not dream he would take me at my word, but he did; the next mail brought me what I asked—my letters, my picture, and not one word besides."

She paused, her breath coming in quick short sobs. Her voice was fainter than ever when she resumed.

"I was ill after that—ill in body and mind. A great loathing of New Orleans and all in it took possession of me—a loathing of life, for that matter. I wanted to die and make an end of all the miserable, never-ceasing pain that tortured me. As I could not die, I wanted to leave New Orleans, the scene of my troubles, forever. A great and indescribable longing to see Ireland once more—to see you—took possession of me. To add the finishing blow, I saw in an English paper the announcement of the approaching marriage of Miss Katherine Dangerfield, only daughter of Sir John Dangerfield, of Scarswood Park, Sussex, to Mr. Gaston Dantree, of New Orleans, with a few romantic details. I think I felt stunned, worn out. In a dim sort of way it struck me I ought to prevent this marriage. I looked in the paper again, determined, if possible, to save Miss Katherine Dangerfield, and dropped it in despair. The wedding-day was fixed for the first of January; it was the twentieth then. It was too late. How was I to tell, that in New York

or elsewhere, he might not have still a third wife, whose claim was prior to mine? I turned sick and cold with the thought.

"Redmond, I wonder I did not die. I wanted to die. I had such a horror of myself—of him—a horror, too, of ever being found out. But there was little danger of that; no one knew; my secret was safe enough. I wrote to you, but you had gone to Algiers. There was no hope but to remain, and drag out life at Menadarva. I still read the English papers for further news of him, and at last I read the cruel story—the horrible tragedy enacted in this house—the story of Katherine Dangerfield's wedding-day, and what came after. She was happier than I. She died, and I could only live on and bear my trouble alone. I wrote to you again and again. A desperate longing to know whether Gaston were alive filled me. I didn't care for him—I abhorred him now, but I wanted to know. If he were dead, I thought, and I were free, I would enter a convent, and find peace for the rest of my days. But I was years waiting before you came. You did come at last—you brought me here—here where he disappeared, and where I hoped to discover something more. But this man Otis, in whose care he was, has gone. I know no more to-day than the day we came. This is my story, Redmond. Pity me, forgive me, if you can."

He had listened in grave silence—he had never interrupted her once. His hand rested still on her soft, dark hair.

"I pity you, I forgive you. It is easy to do both. And this is why you came to Castleford? If you had only told me—but it may not be too late yet. Trust me, Rose; I shall discover, and speedily, whether Dantree be living or dead."

She clasped her hands impassionately.

"If you only could. Oh, Redmond, how good you are—how good—how good! If you only knew what a relief it is to have told you this—to know that you do not hate me for what I have done. I dreaded your knowing more than anything else on earth—dreaded the loss of your love and trust. Even now, but for Miss Herncastle, I might still be dumb."

"Ah, Miss Herncastle. And she knows, of course she does. Pray what has this very remarkable Miss Herncastle to say on the subject?"

"She knew all, that I am Gaston Dantree's wife—how she knows it, she won't tell. She knows, too, whether he is living or dead, but she keeps her knowledge to herself. She told me she had little reason to love or serve my brother's sister—what did she mean by it? That you were very clever in the amateur detective line, and that here was opening for your genius. I couldn't understand her—I implored her to tell me the truth, but it was all in vain—she bade me go to you and tell you one good turn deserved another. Redmond, she is a mystery, a strange, desperate, dangerous woman."

"A mystery," her brother said. "Well, perhaps so, and yet a mystery, I think, I can understand. A dangerous woman. Well, perhaps so again, and yet a woman almost more sinned against than sinning. I pity you, Rose, but I pity Miss Herncastle more."

His sister looked up at him in wonder, but the darkness hid his face.

"You pity her," she repeated, "because she has been turned out of Scarswood?"

"Hardly. Never mind, Rose; you will hear it all soon enough, and when you do, I think you will look upon this designing governess, as I do, 'more in sorrow than in anger.' Let us drop Miss Herncastle and Gaston Dantree, too, for the present, and talk of yourself. You must understand, of course, that in the present state of domestic affairs at Scarswood, the sooner all guests leave the better. Lord Ruysland and his daughter are Lady Dangerfield's relatives, and privileged to stay. For you—you must leave at once. Are you able to travel? You look wretchedly ill."

"Yes," she answered wearily, "I think so. It is more a mind diseased than anything else. It is such an unutterable relief to have told you, and obtained your forgiveness and help, that I feel stronger already. You are right, we must go at once. Poor Lady Dangerfield. Oh, Redmond, brother, what a wretched, wrong-doing world it is!"

"Wrong-doing, indeed," and the chasseur's mouth

grew sterner; "I have little compassion for Lady Dangerfield or any of her class. Place Miss Herncastle, the outcast, and Lady Dangerfield, the injured wife, in the balance, and let us see who will kick the beam. Can you pack to-morrow, Rose? I shall take you to France at once. Then, when you are safe with Madame Landeau, I shall return, begin my search for Dantree, and move heaven and earth until I find him."

She stooped and kissed his hand.

"I can be ready. I shall have only one farewell to make, and that is to Lady Cecil. I wonder if she is happy—you have heard her news, I suppose?"

He knew in an instant what it was—knew before the words were quite uttered. His voice—his grave, steady tones—had changed when he spoke.

"I have heard no news of Lady Cecil. What is it you mean?"

"I mean her engagement to Sir Arthur. He asked her to be his wife on the night of the masquerade, and she has consented. He departed for Cornwall early next morning. It was Lord Ruysland who told us, and, somehow, Redmond, I don't think she is very much happier than the rest of us, after all. He is very wealthy, and it is the desire of her father's heart, but yet I think——"

Her brother arose abruptly.

"A great deal of nonsense, no doubt, Rose. You women never quite outgrow your sentimentality. Sir Arthur Tregenna is a mate for a princess—she should certainly be happy. It grows late, Rose, and you are not strong. You had better retire at once, and, by a good night's rest, prepare yourself for to-morrow's flitting. Good night, my little sister—let us hope even your clouds may have their silver lining."

He stooped and touched his mustached lips to her pale cheek—then he was gone.

The house was very still as he passed out—a sort of awed hush, as though it were a house of death or mourning, reigned.

"What a contrast to the brilliantly lit, brilliantly filled rooms of a week ago. *"Sic transit,"* he said, as his masculine tread echoed along the vaulted hall; "life's a seesaw—up and down. And Lord Ruysland's daugh-

ter's engagement to Sir Arthur Tregenna is not a week old, after all! What of that little romance Lord Ruysland told me six years ago in Torryglen?"

"Ah, O'Donnell!" It was the debonair voice of Lord Ruysland himself that spoke. "Glad to see you again—glad to see any human being in this miserable house. I suppose you have heard all—devil of an affair altogether. May Old Nick fly away with Miss Herncastle! Who ever heard of such a proceeding before? Dressing herself up in Frankland's clothes, and deceiving even Ginevra! Gad! she's a wonderful woman! And what the dickens did she do it for? Out of pure, innate, malevolence, and nothing else, I believe in my soul."

"But it has not been proven that it really was Miss Herncastle," O'Donnell said; "you all appear to have taken that for granted. She has not pleaded guilty, has she? and your evidence—conclusive though it may be, is purely circumstantial. She owns to nothing but having torn up the note."

"She owns to nothing, certainly, but there is such a thing as moral certainty. It may not be evidence in a court of law, but it is quite sufficient to commit a culprit in the domestic tribunal. Miss Herncastle wore the knight's dress, and went to the ball, and has got Lady Dangerfield into a most infernal scrape. That is clear."

"Nothing is clear to me but that Lady Dangerfield has got herself into a scrape," O'Donnell answered, with the stubborn justice that was part of his character. "Give the devil his due, Lord Ruysland. Miss Herncastle made the dress for Lady Dangerfield, but Miss Herncastle could not compel her to wear it to Mrs. Everleigh's masquerade against Sir Peter's express commands. Miss Herncastle may have worn the major's dress and gone to the masquerade as Lara, but I doubt if seeing her there influenced Sir Peter one way or other. His wife disobeyed him—she went to Mrs. Everleigh's in male attire—defying his threats and the consequences. She is no child to be led by Miss Herncastle or any one else—she went with her eyes open, knowing her danger, and I must say—think what you please—that in Sir Peter's place I would do precisely what Sir Peter is doing."

"I don't doubt it," the earl responded dryly; "be good

enough not to say so to Sir Peter, however, should you see him. He is sufficiently bitter without aiding or abetting."

"I am hardly likely to see him. My sister leaves Scarswood to-morrow—Castleford the day after. I will take her to France and place her in charge of a friend of ours there. Of course, it is quite impossible now for her to remain here an hour longer than necessary. I am sorry for Lady Dangerfield—she has been most kind to Rose—most hospitable to me. I seriously trust this disagreeable affair may end amicably, after all."

"Yes, I hope so," the earl answered coolly; "but I doubt it. It is hard on Lady Dangerfield—she may have her faults and her follies—who has not? But with them all, Ginevra was as jolly a little soul as ever lived. And it's a confounded bore for me, now that everything is settled——" and he stopped suddenly and looked askance at his companion.

"You allude to Lady Cecil's engagement, I presume," O'Donnell supplemented, quite calmly. "Rose has told me. My only surprise is, that it should be announced at this late day as news. I believe I am correct in thinking it a very old affair, indeed—of six years' standing, or more."

Very few people ever had the good fortune to see Raoul, Earl of Ruysland, at a loss, but for one brief moment he was at a loss now.

"Very old affair—oh, yes, very—ever since his father's death—in fact, it has been tacitly—er—understood—nothing definite—aw—too young, of course, and all that sort of thing. It was the desire of the late Sir John, as well as myself, and—er—the young people were by no means averse to carrying out our wishes. All is happily settled now—the wedding will take place without any unnecessary delay. Are you going to Castleford at once? I should like half an hour's conversation with you about"—he lowered his voice—"about Miss Herncastle; I have placed a detective on her track."

"My lord!" there was an unmistakable shock in the words.

"A detective on her track," repeated the earl. "Take my word, O'Donnell, that woman means mischief, and

will do it yet. I'll forestall her if I can—I'll find out who she is and what brought her here, before I am many weeks older. I have already discovered——" He paused —the figure of a man was approaching them through the darkness. "Davis," the earl said interrogatively, "is that you?"

"All right, my lord." The man pulled off his cap, halted, and looked keenly at O'Donnell.

"Go into the library, Davis—I'll follow and hear your report."

The man bowed obsequiously again, and went. Lord Ruysland turned to his companion.

"That's my detective; past master of his business, keen as a ferret. I must go and hear his report—it will not detain me long. Then I'll tell you all, and I think you'll acknowledge Miss Herncastle is worth the watching. Wait for me in the drawing-room—Cecil's there, and will amuse you."

He left him and hurried away.

The chasseur stood irresolute for a moment—then, as if his determination was taken, turned and walked into the drawing-room.

He might have thought it deserted but for the low sound of singing that came forth. The lights were down —there was no one to be seen, but far off in the recess where the piano stood he caught a glimpse of a white dress and the gleam of a diamond star. Very softly, very sweetly she sang an old ballad that he had been wont to sing long ago in the little cottage parlor at Torryglen while her white fingers struck the accompaniment. He crossed over and leaned with folded arms against the instrument.

She stopped and glanced up at him again. His eyes were fixed upon her, a steady, thoughtful, almost stern gaze. Again she smiled.

"How fierce the look this exile wears who's wont to be so gay. Captain O'Donnell, what is it?"

The dark gravity of his face broke into an answering smile, still a grave one.

"'The treasured wrongs of six years back are in my heart to-day.' Lady Cecil, my sister and your father have told me all. To-morrow I leave Scarswood, the day

after Castleford, in all likelihood forever. Before I go let me present my congratulations to the future Lady Cecil Tregenna."

She turned suddenly away from him, her head drooped, a deep, painful, burning flush rose up to the very roots of her hair. As she sang the old song, as he stood beside her in the old way, the old, glad days had come back, the golden days of her first youth. Sir Arthur Tregenna and the present had faded for a moment as a dream, and Torryglen and her love, the only love she had ever known, had come back. And the spell was broken—thus.

She could not speak; the keenest pain, the sharpest pang she had ever felt caught at her heart like a hand. For that first instant even her pride forsook her.

"And I can congratulate you," the grave, deep tones of the soldier of fortune went on. "No truer gentleman, no more loyal friend exists, nor, in the future, I believe no more devoted husband than Sir Arthur Tregenna."

"Late—Miss Herncastle's slave and worshiper! Pray add that before you finish your panegyric, Captain O'Donnell."

She hated herself for the passionate words the moment they were spoken, for the bitterness of the tone, for the intolerable pain and jealousy that forced them from her.

"Miss Herncastle has something of the enchantress about her," he said musingly. "I suppose I have not been affected because I have lain for years under another spell equally fatal, and the one has counteracted the other."

She laughed satirically, and began playing a waltz.

"The beau chasseur under a spell! Impossible to imagine such a thing. Who is the sorceress? Some diamond of the desert?—some pearl of the plains?—some lovely Araby's daughter? Who?"

"Let me tell you a story, Lady Cecil," he said abruptly. "The story of, let us say, a friend of mine—an Irishman, too—now an Algerian soldier like myself. Will it bore you very much to listen, Lady Cecil?"

"Go on," she said faintly.

"It was—well, a number of years ago—when my friend was little better than a hobbledehoy of two or three-and-twenty, with a head full of romance and chivalry, an inflammable heart, and an empty purse. He had a long lineage, an old name, a ruined homestead, a suit of peasant's clothes, and nothing else. He lived alone—a dreamer's life, full of vague, splendid hopes for the future, and troubled with very little of that useful commodity—common sense.

"One stormy autumn evening the romance of his life began. An English peer and his only daughter came to his neighborhood to reside for a time, and it chanced that his good fortune enabled him to do the peer's daughter a service. They were very gracious, very grateful, and showed it in many kindly ways. They overlooked the peasant's dress, the stupid bashfulness of my young friend, and invited him to their house, to their table—he became the English girl's daily companion and friend. And his brain was turned.

"Poor fool! He fell in love with her. He didn't tell her, but confessed his passion to her father. The nobleman received him graciously, said he would speak to his daughter, and asked him to call on the morrow.

"Well, the morrow came. And what do you think my friend found? A deserted house—an empty cage—the birds flown. Two notes were placed in his hand by a servant, who sneered at him as he gave them—two brief, cold, hard notes of farewell—that struck him more brutally than blows—one from her, one from her father. It was the old hackneyed, stereotyped form—she was sorry—did not dream that he cared for her—was engaged to another—it was better she should go, and she was always his friend, et cetera. It was written in her handwriting and signed with her name—her father's endorsed it.

"It was only what he richly deserved—you and I can see that—for his presumption, his madness—the only answer that could be given; but Lady Cecil, men have gone mad or died for less."

He paused. His voice had not risen—in the low, grave tone she knew so well, he had told his story; an undertone of sadness and cynicism running through all. There

was a half-smile on his face as he looked at her and waited for his answer.

She started to her feet—the angry flush had long since left her face—she stood before him, pale to the lips—her brown eyes met his full.

"Captain O'Donnell, what story is this? Is it—is it——"

"My own, Lady Cecil. Yes; you hardly need ask the question, I think."

"Need I not? Yours! And what letter is this you talk of, written by my hand and signed with my name? I don't understand."

"You don't understand. A few minutes ago you accused me of a defective memory. But I suppose a matter of such trifling import could not be expected to remain in your memory. I mean the letter you wrote me, rejecting my presumptuous suit—telling me of your engagement to Sir Arthur Tregenna, the night before you left Torryglen."

"I never wrote any such letter."

"Lady Cecil!"

"I never wrote any such——"

She paused suddenly. Over her face there rose a flush, her hands clasped together—she looked at him, a sudden light breaking upon her.

"The note papa dictated, and which he made me write," she said, in a sort of whisper. "Redmond, I see it all!"

The old name, the thrill his heart gave as he heard it. In the days that were gone it had been "Redmond" and "Queenie" always.

"It is my turn not to understand. Will you explain, Lady Cecil? I certainly read the note, written and signed by you."

"I know, I know!" She sank back into her seat and shaded her eyes with her hand. "I see it all now. Papa deceived us both."

In a broken voice, in brief words, she told him the story of that note.

"Papa told me nothing—nothing. I did not know, I never dreamed it was for you. And he hurried me away without a word of explanation or warning. I see it all

now. And the hard things I have been thinking of you all these years, the hard things you must have thought of me! You who saved my life, Captain O'Donnell," with sudden passion, "what must you have thought of me?"

He smiled again.

"Very bitter things in the past, Queenie—in the long past. Of late years, as I grew in wisdom and in grace, I began to see your father acted as most fathers would have acted, and acted right."

"And Captain O'Donnell, who might have been taken at his word by a girl of sixteen, as silly as himself, is only too thankful for his hairbreadth escape. I understand, sir—you don't know what good reason you have to thank Lord Ruysland's common sense. I only wonder the matter having ended so well—for you—you care to allude to the subject at all."

"Only too thankful for my hairbreadth escape!" he repeated. "Queenie, if I had spoken—if you had known!"

"But you did not," she interrupted coldly, "so we will not discuss the question. You have escaped, that is enough for you. I am Sir Arthur Tregenna's affianced wife, that is enough for me. I ask again, why have you spoken at all?"

"Because I could not—hard, cold, immovable as you think me—I could not part with you again—this time forever—without knowing whether or no you really wrote my death-warrant six years ago. It was so unlike you—it has rankled so bitterly all those years, and of late the truth began to dawn upon me. Perhaps because the old, sweet madness has never left me; and when we have parted—when you are a happy wife and I am back in Algiers—the happiness of knowing Queenie was all I thought her—my little love, my true friend, and not even at sixteen a coquette, a trifler with men's hearts—will repay me for all I have lost."

He stopped abruptly. She had covered her face with both hands, and he could see the tears that fell thick and fast.

"Sir Arthur Tregenna is my friend," he said, his own voice broken. "Heaven knows I have no wish to say one

word he may not hear, but, Queenie, I must speak to-night for the first—the last time. I have loved you—I do love you—I will love you while life lasts. If fate had willed it otherwise—if rank and fortune had been mine years ago, they would have been laid at your feet, where my heart has been all these years. Free or plighted, I know well how utterly, wildly impossible it would be for you to listen to me. It may be a dastardly deed to speak at all, but I must. You pity me, at least. Ah! Queenie, I would not have the past changed, with all its suffering, its loss, its misery, if I could. The thought of you is the sweetest thought of my life. If I have distressed you by speaking, I am sorry. Forgive me, Queenie, for this and all the rest."

Forgive! He asked no more. And in that instant, if he had said, "Come," she would have left rank and wealth, father and friends, and gone with him to beggary. But not for the crown of the world would he have said it. He loved her—but honor more.

"Let this be our farewell," he said gently; "let our real parting be now. When we say it again it will be before the world. We will both be the happier, I hope, for understanding each other at last; you will think me no more a cynic and a scoffer—I will know you no more for a heartless coquette. Good-by, Queenie; may God bless you and make you happy!"

He held out his hand; she laid hers in it—the other hid her face. "Their hands clasped and the spirit kissed." "Good-by!" she heard him say again, holding her hand hard. Then he let it go, walked to the door, looked back once at the drooping figure, and was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHAPTER OF WONDERS.

As he crossed the threshold of the drawing-room he encountered Soames, the tall footman.

"My lord's compliments, Captain O'Donnell," Mr. Soames said, bowing. "His lordship's in the library, captain, and requests you to wait upon him there."

O'Donnell nodded and walked forward to the library—

his dark, somber face betraying no more what had just passed than a handsome mask of bronze.

"Come in, O'Donnell," the earl said, in answer to his tap, and the chasseur entered the library, closed the door, and threw himself into a seat.

His lordship was alone—the lamps burned brightly, but even in their brilliance shadows lurked in the corners of the long stately room. The curtains were drawn over the open windows, shutting out the dark, sultry summer night. On a table at the earl's elbow, wine-glasses and cigars stood.

"I suppose you're nearly out of patience by this time," his lordship began, "but Davis' report was unusually lengthy and interesting this evening; Davis' inclination for port wine was even more marked than usual. The lower orders, as a rule, if you observe, have a weakness for port wine, the thicker and sweeter the better. Davis is a clever fellow, and a skilled detective, but no exception to this rule. O'Donnell," he leaned forward and asked the question with most startling abruptness, "what do you know of Miss Herncastle?"

But the sang-froid of O'Donnell was equal to his own—if he thought to throw him off his guard and read the truth in his confusion, he was mistaken. Captain O'Donnell, lying at full length back in his chair, pulling his long trooper mustache, looked across at him; the conscious calm of innocence in his surprised blue eyes.

"What do I know of Miss Herncastle? Well, not a great deal, perhaps, but enough to convince me she is a very fine woman, a remarkably fine woman, indeed, both mentally and physically. A little too clever, perhaps, as Lady Dangerfield seems to have found out to her cost."

"You won't tell me, then. Very well, Davis and I must find out for ourselves. Only it would simplify matters if you would, and I don't see why you should league yourself under Miss Herncastle's piratical black flag."

"Will your lordship think me very stupid if I say I really don't understand?"

"I would if I thought so, but I don't. O'Donnell, it's of no use your fencing me with the buttons on. You know more of Miss Herncastle than you choose to

tell—I believe you met her before you met me, once—in Algiers or in America. A man doesn't take midnight rambles, as a rule, with a lady who is a perfect stranger to him. Oh, don't wear that unconscious look—it doesn't deceive me. I tell you I saw you escorting Miss Herncastle across the fields to this house between one and two in the morning."

"The deuce you did! And how came Lord Ruysland to be, like sister Anne, on the watch-tower between one and two in the morning?"

"I was in my room. Have I told you before, I can never sleep well on bright moonlight nights. I was sitting at my open bedroom window. I saw you, sir. I even heard you. I heard you both?"

"You did? May I ask——"

"I heard her ask you as you stopped if it were to be war to the knife between you, or words to that effect. You answered it shoiuld be as Miss Herncastle pleased. You left her as she stood, and she watched you out of sight almost—by gad! as if you had been her lover. And yet I hardly think you ever were that."

"Hardly. I played the lover once in my life, and received a lesson I am not likely to forget. Who should know that better than your lordship?"

His lordship winced. O'Donnell calmly took up a cigar and lit it.

"I suppose I may smoke while I listen. Nothing clears a man's intellect after dinner like a prime Manila. Will your lordship go on—you look as though you may have seen something more."

"I have. I saw Miss Herncastle steal from her room the following night, waylay Sir Peter, and play ghost. Come, O'Donnell, I am possessed of a burning curiosity concerning Miss Herncastle—make a clean breast of it—and tell me what you know."

"I can tell you all about the moonlight night you speak of, if that is what you mean. I remained later than usual at Scarswood, and, going home, I saw Miss Herncastle taking a moonlight ramble, and, presuming on my previous introduction, took the liberty of joining her. The moonlight may have affected her nerves as well as your lordship's; midnight constitutionals may agree with her,

or she may have been paying a visit—this at least is certain, our meeting was purely accidental, and never occurred before nor since."

"And the mysterious words I heard under my window? Keep your secret and hers, if you will, but I warn you fairly I will find out for myself. Would you like to hear what I have discovered already?"

O'Donnell nodded in smoky silence—more interested than he cared to show. Had his lordship discovered the truth?

"Well," Lord Ruysland said, "from the night I saw her with you, and the night I saw her play ghost, my mind was made up. I had distrusted her from the very first—now I knew she was a dangerous woman. I wrote a letter on the quiet to a friend in London; my friend in London, still on the quiet, paid a visit to Scotland Yard, and sent down Davis, a dingy little man in rusty black, with weak eyes and a meek air, like a parson run to seed. He arrived on the very day of the grand dénouement—the day upon which Miss Herncastle was expelled from Scarswood. She had no friends or acquaintances in Castleford; she had announced her intention of returning to London. Davis and myself were on the platform when she appeared—a signal from me told him she was our game. From that moment she was safe; my share in the business was over. She took a second-class ticket for London—so did Davis. It was a Parliamentary, with no end of stoppages. What do you think Miss Herncastle did? Instead of going to London, she got out at Treverton station, nine miles distant, and deliberately walked back in this direction as far as the town of Lewes. It was quite dark when she reached Lewes, Davis still unseen on her track. She went to a remote little inn in the suburbs of the town called 'The Prince's Feathers,' and remained there all night. She gave no name, and wore a thick green veil over her face. Davis stopped at 'The Prince's Feathers' all night, also. She remained in her room the whole of the ensuing day—it was nine o'clock before she ventured forth; and when she did venture out, still veiled, where do you thin' she went to? Have you ever heard of Bracken Hollow?"

Again O'Donnell nodded

"Bracken Hollow is over three miles from this, and four from Lewes, a tolerable walk, as poor Davis found to his cost. It was a nasty, drizzly night, the roads muddy, the darkness intense, but Miss Herncastle went over the way as though she knew every inch of it. Davis dogged her—saw her within the gate of Bracken Hollow, saw her knock at the door, saw her admitted by an old woman, and saw no more of her that night.

"He waited until daylight, under the trees, in the drizzling rain; but no Miss Herncastle reappeared. He could stand it no longer; the fear of rheumatism was stronger even than his professional patience. He returned to Castleford, ate his breakfast, changed his clothes, came to me, and told me his story. When I tell you that Bracken Hollow is the residence of the late Miss Katherine Dangerfield's nurse—when you recall the striking resemblance Miss Herncastle bears to the late Miss Dangerfield—the coincidence, you will own, is at least striking. The question, in this state of things, naturally presents itself to an inquiring mind—Did Miss Katherine Dangerfield really die at all?"

"Go on," Captain O'Donnell said, with an immovable face.

"It is a question that has occurred to me many times. The resemblance—noticed by all who ever saw the late Sir John's adopted daughter—the coincidence of age—if Katherine Dangerfield had not died she would be precisely Miss Herncastle's age now—and, lastly, this familiarity with Bracken Hollow and Katherine Dangerfield's nurse. The grave is there, to be sure; and yet—— However, never mind that at present. Davis had a double duty to perform—to keep one eye on Sir Peter, while the other was on the ex-governess. We had run the ex-governess to earth; we might leave her safely at Bracken Hollow for the present, and watch the baronet's movements. It will be a horrible thing for Ginevra, this separation. A woman in this case becomes totally extinct for life. I want to arrange matters amicably for this time, and I fancy it will be a lesson that will last her for life. I had sent Frankland back to town. I had called upon Sir Peter at the Scarswood Arms. I found him sullen, and doggedly obstinate beyond all description."

"'I've no objection to seeing your lordship for once in a way,' said this amiable nephew-in-law of mine; 'but if you've come to talk of your niece, or plead for her, I warn you it's of no use.'

"I ventured a mild remonstrance—'the natural levity of poor Ginevra's character—her vanity—her love of balls in general—the deception of that infamous governess,' etc., etc. It was all eloquence wasted.

"'Women of thirty-five should have outgrown their natural levity,' returns my sulky baronet; 'and her vanity and love of pleasure have made a fool of her once too often. I told her not to go, and she went; I warned her of the penalty, and she defied me. I don't care a fig whether it was Miss Herncastle or Major Frankland—she thought it was Frankland, and that's enough. I'll never see her again—I'm blessed if I will! I'll have a separation—I'm blessed if I won't!' Only the word the noble baronet used was not 'blessed.' Upon that I left him and set Davis on the watch.

"He spent the day alone; when night came he went to Dubourg's gambling-house. Davis entered, too, keeping well in the distance, his eye on Sir Peter. He staked and lost, staked and lost, again and again. He played for an hour, losing steadily. In a state of savage rage he was rising to go, when a waiter brought him a card with a line or two penciled on the reverse side. He looked astounded, Davis says, read it again, dropped it, and went forward to meet a stranger who entered. I'll show you that card presently. Davis picked it up unnoticed, and I think it will surprise even you.

"The newcomer was of medium height, very slender, very dark, with hair and mustache of that jetty black you never see in an Englishman. He was a stranger to Davis, and yet something struck him as familiar. Sir Peter put up his double eye-glass and stared in a helpless sort of way. 'What the devil drove you back to Castleford?' he heard Sir Peter say to him; 'I thought you were dead and buried centuries ago. And you've changed, haven't you? They used to call you good-looking; I'll be hanged if I can see it now.' The stranger laughed good-naturedly.

"'Yes, I dare say I have changed,' he said, 'and not

for the better. Six years' knocking about among the sweepings of Europe, and living by one's wits, is not a life conducive to beauty. I'm going back to America, and it struck me I should like to run down here once more and take a look at the old place. You look as though you wondered at that; well, perhaps it is to be wondered at. The truth is,' he took Sir Peter by the button and lowered his tone, 'I heard something of this—this ghost-story, you know, and I had to come. Besides, I want to find out Mrs. Vavasor. I say, Sir Peter, can't we have a private room, and talk the matter over? I have a pocket full of Napoleons here, and we can indulge in a little game of écarté at the same time.'

"The baronet was touched in his vital spot—écarté. They got the private room and had their little game. They played until long after midnight; when they came out, the baronet was in the wild state of elation he is always in when he wins. 'I thought luck would turn,' he said to Dubourg, when he came out. 'I've won sixty Naps of this gentleman, and mean to win as many more to-morrow night. Don't forget, Dantree; I'll give you your revenge to-morrow evening at the Scarswood Arms.' "

"Dantree!" O'Donnell exclaimed.

"I see you remember the name—Katherine Dangerfield's rascally lover. Here's the card Davis picked up in the gambling-house."

O'Donnell was fully aroused now. He flung his cigar away and took the card. On one side was engraved the name "Gaston Dantree," on the other was written in pencil:

"My Dear Sir Peter: I must see you for a moment. I have heard this story of your seeing the ghost of K. D. Perhaps I can throw some light on the subject. G. D."

"This is extraordinary," the chasseur said; "pray go on, my lord."

"Ah, your interest is aroused at last. Wait until you have heard all. The two men parted in Castleford, High Street, and Davis followed the wrong man, Sir Peter. His professional instincts told him the other was his

game, but his orders were Sir Peter. The baronet remained within doors all next day—and Davis strolled quietly over to Bracken Hollow, and hung about the trees, keeping the windows well in sight. He made two discoveries—first, that Miss Herncastle was still there; second, that she and the old woman have a prisoner of some kind in hiding."

"A prisoner!" O'Donnell repeated, thinking of what he had heard at that gruesome house.

"A prisoner—an idiot. Davis is certain. It—he or she—he couldn't tell which, came to the window twice, gibbering and moaning, and uttering strange, unearthly sounds. Once the hard-featured old woman pulled him away, exclaiming, 'Drat the fool; a body can't turn their backs but you're at the window.' The second time Miss Herncastle drew him back—speaking very gently and kindly. He saw her quite plainly—the window was up and she shut it down. As dusk drew on he returned to Castleford and his watch on the baronet. Sir Peter was out—had gone for a walk—to the cemetery of all places; and Davis slipped into his room. If he could only stow himself away and see and hear what went on! There was an old-fashioned clothes-press at one end, with a small window, hung from within with a muslin blind. He ran the risk and took his post in there. At ten precisely Sir Peter entered and Dantree with him. The baronet sat with his back to the clothes-press, Dantree in plain view. Again Davis was struck with the familiarity of the face, but where had he seen it? He looked and listened, and the game went on. It was écarté, and before the first quarter of an hour was over he saw that the baronet did not stand the ghost of a chance against his adversary. Dantree was far and away the better player of the two. And he had sat down to win—his losses last night had been but the usual ruse. They played, and from the first game luck went steadily against the baronet. He ordered wine and brandy, he drank recklessly—his eagerness and fury were something horrible. Dantree won and won—his dark face like stone, his eyes devilish in their malice and triumph. Morning was breaking when he arose, and he held in his hand Sir Peter's check for eight thousand pounds. They

had played for high stakes, and luck had gone dead against the baronet.

"'I'll win it back—by Heaven, I will!' Sir Peter cried, livid and trembling with fury. 'Remember, Dantree, you're to return to-night; I'll have it back or lose more.'

"Dantree bowed and smiled suavely.

"'I shall only be too happy to give you your revenge, Sir Peter. I shall return without fail to-night.'

"Sir Peter accompanied him to the door. Davis seized the opportunity to slip from his hiding-place, half-stifled from want of air, and half-dead from want of sleep. But before sleep or rest was the necessity of finding out something more about this fortunate Dantree. He resolved to follow him home, and he did it. In the gray of the summer morning he dogged Dantree to his abode. It was—here is another astonisher for you—Bracken Hollow."

The chasseur could only sit and stare. "Bracken Hollow?" he murmured helplessly.

"Bracken Hollow. And as he watched him enter, the whole truth burst upon him—the familiarity of his face, his walk—were explained. Gaston Dantree and Helen Herncastle were one and the same."

O'Donnell fairly rose from his chair in the intensity of his surprise.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "My lord, what is it you are saying? Oh, this is too much!"

"It is the truth—I am convinced of it. That woman is capable of anything—anything under Heaven! She personated Frankland at the ball, she personates Gaston Dantree now. Gaston Dantree *in propria personæ* it couldn't be—that I know."

"You know—how?"

"When I got that card, and heard Davis' description of him, I went to Doctor Graves, of Castleford. He knew him, you remember; and asked him for information. The description he gave me of Dantree in no way agreed with Davis' description, except in the color of the hair and mustache. I asked Graves if Dantree ever recovered from his fall down-stairs. The doctor shook his head. I have asked Otis, and he says yes, but I don't believe it. He couldn't recover. Alive he may be—

but if alive he is an idiot. It was impossible, from the nature of the injury he received, that health and reason could both return."

O'Donnell sat mute, his head in a whirl.

"Davis came to me, made his report, returned to the Silver Rose, and slept all day. Sir Peter kept his bed all day—I visited the Scarswood Arms and found that out. Then I took a stroll in the direction of Bracken Hollow. It is the loneliest of all lonely places—no one ever goes there. The thick growth of trees renders it a capital spot for a spy. Safely out of sight myself, I watched that upper window. I had my reward—the gibbering, idiotic face appeared, laughing, mouthing, and talking to itself. I had brought with me a powerful pocket-telescope, and took a long look before any one came. O'Donnell, here is the crowning discovery of the whole—I believe that idiot hidden at Bracken Hollow to be Gaston Dantree!"

"Gracious Heaven!"

"Graves had described the face, remember, and I had a good look. The description tallied. It was a handsome face—or had been when the light of reason was there; black eyes, black hair—regular features, and shaven smooth. The idea would not have struck me had Graves not mentioned that Dantree, if alive, must be an idiot. The question is: What brings him there?"

"A question I cannot answer. I am utterly dazed and stunned. I never heard such an extraordinary chain of occurrences in all my life. To think that Miss Herncastle should personate Gaston Dantree. My lord, it seems it must be simply preposterous. Why, Sir Peter knew Dantree—would see the imposture at once."

"Sir Peter would see nothing of the kind—Sir Peter is as blind as a bat; can't see two inches beyond his own nose. He takes Gaston Dantree for granted. Davis is right, you'll find. Was there ever such another woman in the world?"

"Never, I hope. And it is really your impression that Gaston Dantree, an idiot, is imprisoned at Bracken Hollow?"

"It is really my impression, and I can only account for it in this way: Katherine Dangerfield left him in

charge of this Mr. Otis—from what I hear I infer Otis was in love with Katherine Dangerfield, and her wishes were sacred. He restored Dantree to health, but not to reason, and placed him with the girl's nurse in this desolate house. That is my theory, and it will hold good in the end, you'll find."

"If you saw a portrait of this Gaston Dantree," O'Donnell said thoughtfully, "you could tell, I suppose, whether or no it was the same face you saw at Bracken Hollow?"

"I am certain I could. But is it probable we can procure such a portrait?"

"It is possible, I think. Pray go on and let me hear all. Did Gaston Dantree or Helen Herncastle return to the Scarswood Arms last night?"

"That night was last night, and the soi-disant Dantree returned. Just before nightfall Davis resumed his post under the fir-trees to watch and wait. He was close to the house and kept his eye well on the windows. He saw nothing, but he heard as unearthly and blood-curdling a cry as ever came from maniac lips. If the house were not so utterly isolated and reputed to be haunted —from those very cries—the keeping of this imbecile there, unknown, could never have gone on this long. It was a hazy, muggy sort of day, sultry and sunless, and at half-past eight was quite dark. There was neither moon nor stars. Taking advantage of the gloom my detective actually entered the stone porch and examined the fastenings of the door. He found them, as he suspected, old and frail—in ten minutes at any time he could effect an entrance. No doubt the windows were the same, but before he could test the windows he heard bolts undrawn and voices from within. He had just time to dart behind the porch when Miss Herncastle made her appearance—Miss Herncastle, *en garçon,* and a very flashing young fellow she makes, Davis tells me, black mustache, black evening suit, slouched wide-awake hat, and a wig of curly black hair. Davis has the eye of a hawk—he knew her instanter. A tall, hard-featured old woman followed; old Hannah, no doubt, once Katherine Dangerfield's nurse.

"'It's a daring game—a dangerous game, my child,' he heard the old woman say, in an anxious tone. 'You'll

play it once too often, I greatly fear. Let Sir Peter once suspect, and you're caught like a mouse in a trap. He has the cunning of Satan. I know that of old.'

"'We both know it, don't we, Hannah?' he heard Miss Herncastle say—there's no mistaking his description of her soft, slow, sweet tones; the one thing it appears she cannot change—'and to our cost. Let us see if my cunning cannot overmatch his now. It's a long lane that has no turning. I think the turning for the most noble baronet of Scarswood has come, and he shall find it out shortly to his cost. Do you know the vow I vowed that last night long ago when he insulted me? "Living," I said, "I will pursue you to the ends of the earth—dead, I will come from the grave to torment you." Hannah, I have kept that vow. I have come from the grave—from the very jaws of death—to torment him. I have separated him from his wife—I have frightened him with ghostseeing until his own shadow on the wall makes him tremble and turn pale, and last, but not least—I take his money. Six thousand in one night is a very respectable haul. Hannah—let us see if we cannot make it six more to-night. He doesn't know what a severe apprenticeship I have passed to all grades of skill for his benefit. He is paying me back the three thousand he once refused, with interest, is he not? Good night, Hannah, don't fear for me. After to-night Sir Peter shall have breathing space. Try and keep our poor patient quiet; this seems one of his noisy nights. And don't sit up for me—there's a good soul. I won't be home until daylight.'

"A very remarkable and mysterious speech, is it not, O'Donnell? It struck Davis in that light, and he recollected every word of it—but, then, Davis has an uncommonly tenacious memory. What do you suppose she could have meant now by coming from the grave, and vowing vows, and all that melodrama? Did Katherine Dangerfield not die, after all? Was that death and burial only sham; and is Miss Herncastle Katherine Dangerfield alive in flesh?"

His lordship looked keenly across the table at his companion. Still the chasseur sat like the marble Aganemnon behind him, his face locked in as stony calm.

"Go on," was his grim response.

"Davis followed, as in duty bound, and saw the personator of Mr. Dantree safe within the baronet's apartments. He hovered about the passage—airing his eye and ear at the keyhole when opportunity presented. They played the livelong night—the baronet more desperately, more recklessly than ever, more like a madman, indeed, than a sane gambler. He drank brandy at a perfectly furious rate—he doubled and redoubled the stakes and still he lost—lost. He seemed to go mad at last; an immense heap of gold and bank-notes changed hands. Davis calculates that he must have lost enormously—thousands. He sprang up at last as day was dawning, with a perfect shriek of rage and frenzy, accused Dantree of foul play, of being in league with the devil to rob him. Dantree laughed in his face, and swept the gold and notes into his pockets, filling them all.

"'I'll take your check for the remainder, Sir Peter Dangerfield,' he said coolly; 'eighteen hundred pounds exactly.'

"The words seemed to goad the little baronet to madness; he sprang upon Dantree and seized him by the throat—I say Dantree, you understand, for convenience. The next instant there was a sharp click, and through the keyhole Davis saw the cold muzzle of a pistol held within an inch of the baronet's head.

"'You coward—you bully—you fool!' he heard Dantree say, between his clenched teeth. 'Stand off, or, by the Lord that made me, I'll shoot you! Write out the check, or——'

"He did not need to say more. The baronet turned of a greenish white, and fell back with a yelp of terror. He wrote the check, his hand shaking so that he could hardly hold the pen, and passed it with a white face of abject fear to the other. Dantree pocketed it and the pistol.

"'I shall cash these checks at Castleford Bank to-day,' were his parting words, 'and I shall carry my pistol. Don't let me see you anywhere in the visible horizon. Shall we cry quits this morning, or shall I return to-night and give you a second revenge?' He laughed insolently in Sir Peter's face. 'Ah, I see. You've had

enough. Well, good morning to you, Sir Peter. My advice is like Lady Macbeth's: "To bed! to bed!" You really haven't the nerve, you know, for this sort of thing. As I've heard them say out in New York: "You can't gamble worth a cent." Once more, most noble Lord of Scarswood, adieu!'

"Davis followed Mr. Dantree back, and saw him safely housed at Bracken Hollow. Then he returned—to report to me and take his necessary sleep. Off and on I have been on the watch myself to-day, but have discovered nothing. I, also, called upon Sir Peter this afternoon, and found him in bed—his complexion yellower than I ever saw it, his wizen face more wizen—a picture of abject misery and despair. He was only too glad to pour his piteous tale into any sympathetic ear. He had lost in two nights thirteen thousand pounds. Enormous stakes, surely. I got the story of the pistol, of Dantree's threatening language, of his conviction of foul play. Personal fear of that pistol alone prevents his giving the case into the hands of the police, and having Dantree arrested for carrying deadly weapons and threatening his life. Of his wife or the separation he declined to speak—that is a minor matter compared to the loss of his money. Now, my idea is, to find Miss Herncastle, prove my knowledge of her infamous conduct—threaten her with the law, and make her refund all, or part, of her ill-gotten gain. Then I shall make its restoration and her exposure the price of Sir Peter's peace with his wife. I see no other way at present to patch up matters between him and Ginevra."

"And that will fail," O'Donnell said decisively. "You mistake both Miss Herncastle and Sir Peter if you fancy you can intimidate the one, or trust the other. She will laugh in your face as she did in his, and defy you, and he will promise whatever you desire, and break the promise the instant the money is restored. That way is hopeless, believe me."

"Then, what is to be done? Let this nefarious plot go on—let her escape with her spoils—let this idiot remain shut up there—terrifying all who hear him? O'Donnell, you know more of this extraordinary woman than you choose to tell; in the face of all this, can you

still be silent? It is the duty of every man to hunt such a woman as that down."

"And yet to hunt any woman down seems hardly a creditable or manly thing. And Sir Peter Dangerfield and Gaston Dantree may have rightly earned all that has befallen them. I believe all you have told me of Miss Herncastle, and yet without being particularly maudlin or soft-hearted, I don't feel disposed to sit in judgment upon her. Wait, my lord, give me time to think. One's head whirls after all this."

"What is that you said about the bona-fide Dantree's picture? I would like to see it if you can procure it. Who has it?"

"I don't know that any one has it, but I fancy my sister may."

"Your sister!"

"Yes—Rose. Your lordship will recollect she's from New Orleans, and I am aware she knows this Dantree. She did not speak of it—it was not necessary; and his acquaintance, as he turned out here, was hardly a thing to boast of. It still wants a few minutes of eleven," he pulled out his watch. "She may not have retired. I'll run up to her room, if you like, and ascertain."

Lord Ruysland signified his wish, and the chasseur ran, three steps at a time, up the broad, low stairs. He tapped at his sister's door.

"It is I, Rose," he said. "If you are up, let me in."

The door opened immediately—Rose, in a white dressing-gown, brushing her long, dark hair, stood before him.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I forgot to ask you, when I promised to hunt up this fellow Dantree, if you had any portrait of him. Of course, it is necessary to know what he is like, and no description is equal to a likeness. Have you one?"

She bent her head and moved away to her writing-case. Out of one of the drawers she procured a card-picture wrapped in silver paper. She placed it in her brother's hand.

"It is—it was a most excellent likeness. Any one who ever saw him once would recognize it. Redmond, have you heard—is there any news of——" Her voice died away.

"I will tell you in a day or two. I have reason to think he is not dead. As yet, of course, I know nothing positively. In any case, you are safe from him, Rose."

He was looking at the picture as he spoke. A photograph softly tinted—finely executed. In all its brilliant *beauté du diable* the fatal face that had wrecked the lives of Marie de Lansac and Katherine Dangerfield looked up at him from the card—the pictured eyes alight—the square-cut, perfect mouth half-smiling—faultless almost as the face of the Apollo. As he looked, O'Donnell for the first time could understand and almost forgive his sister's folly.

"A rarely perfect face," he thought, "a face to make a fool of any woman. And to think the end of all his brilliance, all his beauty, should be—Bracken Hollow."

He left his sister, rejoined the earl, now pacing to and fro the library. In the past twenty years of his life Lord Ruysland had never been fully aroused from his supineness before—never entered heart and soul into anything as he was entering into the hunting down of this young woman. He paused and looked at the vignette.

"It is as I fancied," O'Donnell said. "Rose has his picture. No doubt he favored all the young ladies of his acquaintance with his handsome face. Here—look and tell me if his is the face you saw?"

Under his outward carelessness his pulses were throbbing with feverish fear. He handed the earl the picture. The next instant he was aroused as the earl uttered a cry of recognition.

"I knew I was right!" he said, in a voice of suppressed intensity. "This is the face I saw at the window—the face of old Hannah's visitor—younger, handsomer, but the same. This picture makes that much clear, at least—Gaston Dantree is the idiot of Bracken Hollow."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST LINK.

The late Parliamentary train rushing into the Castleford station some time after nine on the evening of this same eighth of August, brought among its passengers a

little woman, dressed in black silk, wearing a Paisley shawl and a close black veil. The black silk was shabby, the Paisley shawl bore marks of age and wear, the little straw bonnet was last season's shape, and two words accurately describe the little woman tripping along the station—shabby genteel. She entered the ladies' waiting-room, her veil still over her face, leaving no feature discernible save the hard, bright glitter of the black eyes. She glanced around with a half-eager, half-frightened air, but no creature was visible save herself.

"I thought—I thought he might be here," she said, in a whisper under her veil. "I feel afraid to-night—I don't know of what—I have had the feeling since I got the letter first. What if it should be a trap?—and yet how can it? Who knows—who would take the trouble? If I only dare inquire."

She stood in the middle of the room irresolute, went forward, came back, stood still again, undecided.

"I don't know what ails me to-night," she muttered. "I feel as though I were going to die or—or something terrible about to happen. Is it a presentiment? Lord Ruysland is here—she is here. My little one—mine—the only creature on earth that belongs to me. If I could only see her—if I thought Lionel meant what he says. It seems far too good to be true—it is like a dream."

She drew from the bosom of her dress a letter, and looked at the envelope and superscription. It was postmarked Castleford and addressed:

MADAME HARRIET VAVASOR,
Rue de ——, Paris,

in a large, masculine hand. She opened it, and read for the hundredth time its contents:

"HARRIET: I am in England once more, in Castleford, on a visit to Lord Ruysland. My wife is dead out in Quebec. After infinite trouble I have discovered your address. Harriet, I know all—the miserable story of my dead sister's plotting that separated us four-and-twenty years ago. If the memory of that time has not wholly

died, if you are free as I am, come to Castleford and meet me. I enclosed a *billet de banque* in case you should need it. Do not ask for me—let no one suspect or frustrate us this time. We will meet in secret. On the night of the eighth of August, at ten o'clock, I will be in waiting near the gate of the house known as Bracken Hollow. You know it, beyond doubt. When we meet I will explain everything—the cause of this secrecy, why I have selected that particular spot, how I discovered your identity with the Mrs. Vavasor, who six years ago visited Sir John Dangerfield. Only come. I long for you as ardently as I did four-and-twenty years ago. You would not have failed me then; do not fail now.

"LIONEL CARDANELL."

She read this singular epistle over word for word, then folded and replaced it in her dress.

"If I only dare ask," she muttered again. "But if I obey him in one thing, I obey him in all. And it must be all right. Who is there alive that knows—who would take the trouble to delude me? To think—to think, after all these years, I shall stand face to face with him again. His wife dead—he free. And I—if he should discover the hideous story of the past, my past—all my crime—all my wrong-doing, the story of my life revenge."

The station clock struck sharply the quarter-past nine. It aroused her; there was no time to spare. She walked resolutely out of the waiting-room—a fly stood near. She beckoned to the driver to approach.

"You know Bracken Hollow?"

"Surely, ma'am," looking suspiciously at the veiled face; "a main and lonesome place it be."

"I want to go there—at least, to within a quarter of a mile or so. I will pay you now; how much?"

The flyman named his price. She counted it into his palm, and took her seat. In a moment they were rattling through Castleford High Street on their way. She looked about her; how familiar it all was; the shops she knew so well—the Silver Rose, where she had stopped, the cottage of Henry Otis, and—she shuddered as she looked at it—the lonely churchyard with its lonely grave.

Poor Katherine Dangerfield! And Gaston Dantree—what had become of him?"

"It's a story I hate to think of," she thought. "That dead girl's face rises before me nights when I can't sleep—white and still as I saw her in her wedding-dress. And Gaston Dantree—I see him in my dreams as I saw him that night, all bruised and bleeding at the foot of the stairs. All dead, and through me. I wish I had been satisfied with my first revenge—when I gave the earl the wrong child. I wish I had let Katherine marry Dantree and live. It's a horrible thing to have a dead face haunt one's dreams."

They left the town behind and took the quiet lane leading to Bracken Hollow. The night was close—dark, moonless, starless; the trees loomed up black on every hand; no living thing was to be seen. That chill feeling of vague fear increased—it was all so strange, so unreal. Why had he come back? Why had he chosen this desolate spot? What was to come of it all? She shivered in the still warmth of the night and wrapped her shawl closer around her. The driver suddenly stopped.

"Bracken Hollow be yonder," he said, pointing with his whip. "Keep straight on—there's no mistaking it; it's not twenty yards from this."

He helped her to descend, then remounted, turned his horse, and went jolting back toward the town.

She stood in the darkness in the middle of the lane, where he had left her, feeling as lost as a shipwrecked sailor on a desert island. She stood watching him until the last sound of the wheels died away. Then she reluctantly turned and looked before her.

Darkness everywhere—black trees—blacker sky—dead silence. She walked slowly on.

The gate of Bracken Hollow. Why, she murmured again—why, of all the lonesome places on earth, had he chosen this?

"It looks like the place for a murder," she thought, glancing fearfully around. "If some one should start out from these trees—some gipsy—or poacher—or——"

A cry broke from her; she started back. A tall figure had stepped out from under the black trees.

"Harriet," a voice said, "is it you?"

"Lionel!"

"Lionel Cardanell—yes. Then, you have come! I feared you would not; you sent no answer. And after all those years, Harriet, we stand face to face again?"

Face to face, perhaps, but, in the deep darkness, the face of neither to be seen. Her heart was beating so fast that it seemed to suffocate her. She could not speak. He took both her hands in his, and led her on.

"This way, Harriet. I made Bracken Hollow the place of tryst because we can enter and talk undisturbed. I feared you would not come. I might have known you better; I might have known that whenever or wherever I called, you would have answered. Can you realize, Harriet, that it is I?"

She could not, indeed. No voice within responded to his tone or touch. That creeping sensation of fear was over her still. He had drawn her hand within his arm, and was hurrying her rapidly on. She looked up at him, tall above her, and strove to recall some resemblance. She could recall none. All was strange, vague, and unknown. She did not speak one word; she left herself be hurried on, breathless and palpitating.

They reached the gate; he opened it. The house loomed up, all darkness and silent amid its funereal trees. At sight of it she suddenly stopped.

"I can't go on!" she gasped. "I can't enter there! It looks like Hades itself! Oh, Lionel Cardanell, is this really you?"

"Come, come, come!" was his only answer, spoken firmly.

He hurried her forward; she had no power or strength to resist. The door was flung wide at their approach. Almost before she could realize it she was in the house—in a lighted room; the door was closed behind her, locked, and barred.

An old woman stood before her; at her she did not look. She turned to the man, trembling from head to foot. His coat-collar was turned up, his slouched hat pulled down; but hidden as his face was, she knew in an instant it was not the man she had come to meet.

"Who is it?" she said, in a sort of whisper, her black eyes gleaming fearfully through her veil.

He turned down his collar, took off his hat, and showed the pale, set face of—Henry Otis.

"You recognize me, Mrs. Vavasor? Yes, I see you do. It is many years since we met, but your memory is good, I know of old. Will you not put up your veil and let us see you? Further disguise is unnecessary."

She obeyed him. She flung back the veil and showed a face, aged, sallow, pallid with fear—all trace of beauty gone—nothing of it remaining but the wild black eyes.

"Mr. Otis," she gasped, "why have you done this?"

"To make you tell the truth at last," he answered. "There is but one way of dealing with such women as you—and that is the dark way of deceit. Yes, I wrote you that letter signed Lionel Cardanell. I knew that poetic idyl of your youth, you see; and it has succeeded better even than I hoped. You have no idea what a task it was to hunt you up, and then hit on a scheme to fetch you here; but I have done both. If you had not come to me, I should have gone to you. Take a seat; you look fatigued. Hannah, Mrs. Vavasor will take a glass of wine."

She sank into the sea, her eyes fixed fearfully upon him, her very lips trembling. Years and dissipation had told upon Mrs. Vavasor's strong nerves.

"Why have you brought me to this place?" she asked.

"Not to murder you—do not be afraid; though it looks gruesome enough for a murder, I dare say. I don't mean to do you the least harm—to do you good, indeed—to make you tell the truth."

"The truth about what?"

He leaned across—there was a table between them, and his steely-blue eyes seemed to cut into her very heart.

"About the children you changed at nurse twenty years ago. The time has come for the truth to be made known. You gave your daughter to the Earl of Ruysland, and you kept his. How will you answer to God and man for that?"

There had been a time when Mrs. Vavasor would have had pluck enough to reply as Claverhouse replied to the same question of the Covenanter's widow: "To man I

can answer well enough, and God I will take in my own hand;" but that time was past. She sank back in her seat, her hands over her eyes, cowering, shrinking, like the guilty creature she was, before him—not daring to meet that stern, terrible face. The strange adventure, her nervous fear, the darkness, the solitude—all were telling upon her as such things tell upon women."

"It was rather a hackneyed plan of vengeance," the cold, quiet, pitiless tones of Henry Otis went on, "taken second-hand from one of your favorite three-volume novels, and quite unworthy the originality and inventive genius you have displayed in later years. You make no attempt to deny it, I see; that at least is wise."

"I do deny it," cried Mrs. Vavasor, plucking up courage from sheer desperation at last. "I don't know what you are talking of. How dare you bring me here? What is the meaning of this infamous plot? How dare you detain me in this dreadful house? Let me go, Henry Otis, or it will be worse for you."

She rose up and faced him—at bay—her face gray with fear, and a hunted light in her black eyes.

"How dare you write me that letter?—how dare you sign that name?—how dare you bring me all the way from Paris to—to meet——"

She stopped suddenly, covered her face with both hands, and burst into a passion of tears—tears of rage, of fright, of disappointment. The old love for the handsome, high-born lover of her youth lived yet in her heart—that battered, world-hardened heart had throbbed with the purest rapture it had felt for years at the thought of seeing him once more; and it was bitter—bitter to her beyond all telling to have it end like this.

"If there be a law to punish such treachery as this, you shall be punished, Henry Otis, when I go free," she passionately cried.

"'When you go free,'" Mr. Otis repeated; "ah, but you are not going free! I don't do my work in that bungling way. As cleverly as you plotted to entrap Katherine Dangerfield six years ago, so I have entrapped you to-night. Pause a moment and think. No one—not a soul—knows you are here, and I presume you have left no friends behind in Paris who will trouble them-

selves greatly to make search for you. Women like you make no friends. This house, as you have seen, is utterly lonely and isolated—it is reputed to be haunted—no one comes here who can possibly avoid it. And here you stay—though it shall be weeks, months—until you make a full confession. Make it to-night, and you go free—refuse, and you are locked up until you do. Here are pen, ink, and paper—dictate your confession and I will write it down."

She sat mute, dogged, her hands clenched, her lips shut, her eyes glittering.

"What do you know?" she asked sullenly.

"Enough to send you to Newgate. That when Lord Ruysland came to your cottage to claim his child a year after its mother's death, you gave him yours and kept his. You kept the infant Lady Cecil Clive, and gave the Earl of Ruysland John Harman's daughter. John Harman's daughter lives in luxury at Scarswood Park to-night, and Lady Cecil Clive, the real Lady Cecil Clive, is —where, Mrs. Harman? Sold like a slave to strangers in her third year—strangers who loved her, little thanks to you. Still your vengeance against her dead mother, who had robbed you of your lover, was not sated. On her wedding-day you came forward and told the world she was not the daughter of Sir John Dangerfield—you took care not to tell whose daughter she was—you robbed her of her husband, home, and name—you killed her as surely as ever murderess killed her victim. That is what I know. The story Lord Ruysland shall hear, whether or no you confess. The law of England would force your story from you if I gave you over to it. I chose, however, to take the law in my own hand. Out of this house you never go alive until you have confessed."

She listened to him, her face settling, sullen and dark.

"I'll never confess. I say again I don't know what you are talking of. I gave Lord Ruysland his daughter —mine died. The child Sir John Dangerfield adopted was my—my cousin's daughter; I had an old grudge against her mother. I say again, Henry Otis, let me go, or it will be worse for you. Threats and illegal punish-

ment are Newgate matters, if it comes to that. Let me go, or I'll——"

What Mrs. Vavasor meant to do Henry Otis was never destined to hear. The words seemed to freeze upon her lips—her face slowly blanched to the ashen hue of death—her eyes dilated with some great horror. Henry Otis followed her glance.

Old Hannah had quitted the room unobserved some seconds before, leaving the door ajar. Through this door, without sound of any kind, a figure had glided. It stood now just within the doorway, perfectly still, its eyes fixed on vacancy. It wore a dress of some white summery stuff, its long, loose hair fell over its shoulders, its face was perfectly white, its eyes cold and fixed, its arms hung loose by its side.

So, as in years past she had a hundred times seen Katherine Dangerfield living, she saw her once more to-night dead. Dead surely—and this was her ghost.

She uttered no cry, no sound. Slowly, step by step, she recoiled, that utter horror on her face, her eyes fixed on the motionless figure, until the wall barred her progress.

"Look!" she whispered, in an awful voice. "Look!"

"Look where?" Henry Otis repeated stoically. "I don't see anything."

"At the door!" still in the same awful whisper; "see—it is—Katherine Dangerfield! Look!"

"Well," Mr. Otis responded testily, "I am looking and I don't see anything. You're dreaming, Mrs. Vavasor. Katherine Dangerfield is in Castleford churchyard, is she not? She can't be at Bracken Hollow. Come! look at me, and leave off staring in that ghastly way at nothing."

She turned her eyes slowly upon him for an instant, then they moved back as if beyond all control of hers to the door. The specter had vanished. And Mrs. Vavasor, with a gasping cry, fell down fainting in a heap.

"Artistically done. You're the most useful of ghosts, Katherine," Mr. Otis cried, springing up. "Come in, pray, and fetch salts and cold water. I think she'll need no urging to tell now."

Miss Herncastle came forward, a smile on her face—the salts in her hand.

"I don't think she will. It was quite as much as I could do to preserve my gravity, standing stock-still there under her horrified gaze. I am afraid I should have laughed outright, and spoiled the tableau if you had not called her attention off. Yes, I think we shall have the truth now."

"You had better go—she is coming round," said Mr. Otis, as the widow's eyelids fluttered; "vanish, Katherine, and send Hannah here. You'll hear all in the passage."

Hannah reentered—Miss Herncastle disappeared. Mrs. Vavasor's black eyes opened to the light. She started up—memory returning with consciousness—and grasped the arm of Henry Otis.

"Has she gone?" Her eyes went wildly to the door. "Yes, I tell you I saw her—Katherine—as plainly as I ever saw her in my life. Mr. Otis, for God's sake! take me away—don't leave me, or I shall go raving mad."

"I shall take you away, and I shall not leave you a moment alone, if you will speak the truth."

"Yes—yes, I will. I'll do anything—tell anything, only stay with me, for the love of Heaven! I would rather die than see her again."

She cowered down into her chair, her face hidden in her hands, and in a sort of gasping whisper told her story.

"I confess it all," Mrs. Vavasor began; "I don't know how you have found it out, but it is true, every word. I did change the children. I hated the Countess of Ruysland; but for her I would have been Lionel Cardanell's wife. I married John Harman, but I despised him. Poor, weak fool, I was glad when he died. She gave me money, she gave me presents, and I took them all, and hated her more every day. She wasn't happy with her husband—that was some comfort. She was jealous—she had a furious temper; Katherine inherited it, you may remember." She shivered as she pronounced the name. "My baby was a month old the night she ran away from the earl in a fit of fury and came to me.

I didn't care for the child; I always disliked children; I used to wish it might die. It was a great deal of trouble, and I hate trouble; and it looked like John Harman. Why should I care for it? She came to me; she thought I had forgotten and forgiven, and was her friend. She didn't know me, you see. That night her baby was born—a girl, too. Next morning she was dead. She died in my arms, in my poor cottage, without husband or friend near her. That would have satisfied most women—it didn't satisfy me. They came and took her away. The earl told me to keep and nurse the child—who so fit as I? I don't believe he ever looked at it. He didn't much care for his wife, but the manner of her death was a shock and a scandal. They buried her, and he went away.

"It was then that the plan of changing the children occurred to me. Some people believe the spirits in heaven hear and see and watch over their loved ones on earth. No doubt the Countess of Ruysland was in heaven—could a lady of her rank go anywhere else? Well, it would be a satisfaction to let her see her daughter growing up in poverty and obscurity, and John Harman's in rank and luxury. His lordship paid me well; I sold out Harman's business and left the town, where I and the children were known. I went to live in a village some thirty miles away, where the fraud could be carried on in safety. I took no especial care of either of them, but they grew and thrived in spite of that. My daughter had brown eyes and flaxen hair, and was small and delicate-looking—much the prettier of the two. The earl's daughter had gray eyes and fair hair, and was large for a child of two years. She had her mother's temper and her mother's will; mine was one of the gentlest creatures that ever was born; I called the earl's daughter Katherine. I called mine Cecil, as Lord Ruysland had desired his daughter to be named. I was well paid, but I grew tired to death of taking care of them and vegetating in a stupid village. I wrote to Lord Ruysland to come for his child.

"He came, and I gave him mine. I did not let him see the other at all; I told him my little girl was ailing, and he took the other away totally unsuspecting. Then

I sold off everything and went to France, taking little Kathie with me. The collision in which I was badly hurt followed—the child escaped. In the hospital Colonel Dangerfield came to see me; he thought I was poor, and I did not undeceive him. His only daughter had been instantly killed—he offered to adopt little Kathie in her stead, and I closed with the offer at once. I never saw her again until, under the name of Mrs. Vavasor, I came to Scarswood Park, and met her as Sir John's heiress.

"I solemnly swear that the young girl who was known as Katherine Dangerfield was in reality the Lady Cecil Clive, only child of the Earl and Countess of Ruysland. The person who now bears that title is my daughter, christened Katherine Harman. I will swear this in any court of law. I changed them out of revenge upon the late Lady Ruysland.

(Signed) "HARRIET HARMAN."

The wretched woman wrote her name, old Hannah and Henry Otis affixed theirs as witnesses. He folded up the document, superscribed it "Confession of Harriet Harman," and placed it in his breast pocket. She sat watching every motion with terrified eyes.

"What are you going to do with it?" she asked.

"I am going to place it in the hands of Lord Ruysland between this and to-morrow night. The rank and name your daughter has usurped for two-and-twenty years, shall be taken from her before the expiration of four-and-twenty hours."

"It was no fault of hers," the guilty woman said, with trembling lips.

"You made Lord Ruysland's daughter pay the penalty of her mother's actions—yours shall pay the penalty of hers. For you," Mr. Otis arose, "Lord Ruysland shall deal with you as he sees fit."

She started to her feet and caught him as he was turning away.

"Take me away from this horrible house—now, at once. You promised, you know. Do anything you like, only take me away."

"Not to-night," he answered coldly. "It is impossible.

You would make your escape, and that I can't allow. Six years ago you had your day—this is mine. The mercy you showed Katherine Dangerfield then shall be meted out to you now. Don't be afraid—you shall not be left alone. You shall have a light. Hannah, take her up to the room prepared for her, and remain with her all night."

He drew himself from her grasp, and left the room. He heard her cry of terror and despair as he went out. Miss Herncastle still stood in the passage. He took her hand and led her into another room, and gave her the paper.

"The world shall know you as you are at last," he said; "shall give you the name you should have borne from your birth. Let me be the first to call you by it." He lifted her hand to his lips. "Lady Cecil Clive."

CHAPTER XV.

HUNTED DOWN.

It was very early on the morning of the ensuing day—so early that the rosy spears of sunrise were but just glancing through the tall firs and waving brake around Bracken Hollow—when a loud, authoritative knock aroused the inmates of the lonely old house from their slumbers. In five minutes, old Hannah was up and dressed, and in the room of her young mistress.

Katherine—let us call her by the old name—had sprung from her bed, also, as that authoritative knock resounded through the house.

"It must be Henry Otis—it can be no one else at this hour. Go open the door, Hannah, and let them in, whoever they may be."

"But, my dear——"

"There is nothing to fear, whether it be friend or foe. If they do not come to me, I shall go to them. The power is mine now, and the victory. Before the sun sets, Harriet Harman's confession shall be in the hands of my Lord Ruysland. They shall learn, one and all, who the despised governess whom they have turned from their doors is to their cost."

"And then?" old Hannah said.

"Ah! And then—'Sufficient unto the day,' etc. Go open the door, Hannah—there is the knock again; and on my word, whoever the gentleman is, he knocks commandingly."

Hannah went. She flung open the door and stood confronted by a tall man, with a dark, handsome, stern-looking face, and an unmistakably military air.

"I wish to see Miss Herncastle," this gentleman began, with perfect abruptness; "I know that she is here."

"Who are you, sir?" old Hannah demanded, with equal sternness; "and by what right do you come at such a time of morning as this, routing decent folks out of their beds?"

"My name is O'Donnell. I am Miss Herncastle's friend, and I have come to do her a service while there is yet time. Before two hours it may be too late. Give her this, I entreat you, and tell her I must see her."

"He says it as though he were a king," thought old Hannah. "He looks grand enough and noble enough for any king. O'Donnell? Why, he's the Irish officer who found her out—that she's most afraid of."

She stood irresolute, holding the card he had given her, and looking angrily and doubtfully from him to it.

"I don't know what you want here—what you mean by coming here. You're no friend of Miss Herncastle's—I know that. You're the man that followed her—that has been her enemy and pursuer from the first. How dare you call yourself her friend?"

"I tell you," O'Donnell exclaimed impatiently, "I am her friend; I want to serve her if she will let me. She has rendered herself amenable to the law; she is an object of suspicion; the officers are on her track. If you are her friend, you will give her that card at once."

"Yes, Hannah, give it to me. I'm not afraid of Captain O'Donnell. Let me see what he has to say."

It was Katherine herself—in slippers and dressing-gown—her brown hair undone, rippling in the old girlish way over her shoulders. In that white neglige, with hair unbound and its natural color, she looked, with the rose-flush of the August sunrise upon her, younger, fairer, fresher than he had ever seen her before.

She took no notice of him. She received the card from Hannah gravely—and gravely examined it. Beneath his name in pencil was written:

"I know that you are here. I come as your friend. If you have any regard for yourself, you will see me at once."

She looked up and held out her hand to him with a smile—a smile that had something of the old brightness, the old saucy defiance of Katherine Dangerfield.

"Good morning, Captain O'Donnell. My friends are so few and far between at present, that it would be a thousand pities to refuse an audience to one of them. But you my friend! Isn't that rather a new rôle for the gallant captain of chasseurs?"

She led the way into the bare-looking apartment, where last night Harriet Harman had made her confession, and pointed to a chair. There was a grace, a triumph about her he had never seen before—the whole expression of her face was changed. Where was the sad, somber face of Miss Herncastle now? A sort of proud triumph lit all the face before him.

He accepted the chair only to lean across its wooden back and look at her. She stood where the golden sunshine fell fullest upon her—her tall form looking taller and more classic than ever in her trailing white robe, a crimson cord for her girdle. The brown hair was swept off forehead and temples, showing the scar on the left plainly, and adding to the nobility of her face. The black had been washed from the eyebrows—altogether she was changed almost out of knowledge. There was a smile on her lips, a light in her eyes, a glow on her cheeks that transfigured her. The hour of her victory had come; she stood before him

> "A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
> And most divinely fair."

Yes, fair in this moment, if never fair before.

"Will Captain O'Donnell—my friend—who has hunted me down from first to last—speak? What is it that has taken you out of your bed at this uncivilized hour, and brought you to Bracken Hollow, and me?"

The ringing tone of her voice, the meaning sparkle of eye and smile, confounded him.

"It is so easy to be mistaken," she went on, still smiling. "I confess among the few, the very few I count as my friends, your name is the last I should ever dream of adding to the list. But, then, strongly marked characters have strongly original ways of proving their likes and dislikes. Hunting me down may be your way of proving your friendship. What is it Captain O'Donnell has come here at six in the morning to say?"

"To say you are in danger—to say your game is up, to say all is known—that the police are on your track, that this very day—or to-morrow, at furthest, they will be here. To warn you for the last time."

"For the last time—to warn me of what?"

"To fly—I repeat, all is known—all."

"What does all comprise? May I ask you to explain?"

"It means that a detective has been on your track from the hour you quitted Scarswood, that by day and night you have been watched, that you are known as the Gaston Dantree who, by fair means or foul, has won an enormous sum from Sir Peter Dangerfield at cards—that the real Gaston Dantree is shut up here at Bracken Hollow—an idiot, and has been for years. Ah, you feel that. I repeat—all is known—all."

The smile faded from her lips, the old hard expression looked at him out of her gray eyes.

"A detective on my track. I did not dream of that, indeed. And to whom am I indebted for that delicate attention? To my friend Captain O'Donnell, of course."

"No, Miss Herncastle, not in this instance. To the Right Honorable the Earl of Ruysland."

A shadow came over her face, a gray, somber shadow. She sat down suddenly with an altered expression.

"The Earl of Ruysland," she repeated. "What had I done to him? Ah, I understand—the law calls upon every honest man to hunt down a rogue. And the Earl of Ruysland has set a detective on my track. Is this all his noble lordship has discovered, or is there something else?"

"This is all he has absolutely discovered, but there is something else. He strongly suspects the death and

burial of Katherine Dangerfield to be bogus, and Miss Herncastle and Katherine Dangerfield to be one and the same."

"Was it acting on this suspicion that you went up to London and nearly frightened poor Mrs. Otis to death?"

"I was acting on no suspicion—I rarely act on that. I was acting on certainty. I knew the grave in Castleford churchyard to be a fraud—the tombstone lying even more than tombstones usually lie. I knew that grave held an empty coffin."

"May I ask how?"

"In the simplest manner possible. I employed a resurrectionist, and I opened the grave. We raised the coffin, opened that, and found, as I told you—nothing."

"You did this?"

"I did this."

She sat and looked at him—wonder, not unmixed with a species of amusement and admiration, in her face.

"And yet you call yourself my friend. Captain O'Donnell, you're an extraordinary man."

"No; I don't see it," he answered coolly. "It wasn't anything very extraordinary. From the hour I discovered your identity with the New York actress my suspicions were aroused. You had never given up the stage and buried yourself alive at Scarswood in the capacity of governess without some powerful latent motive. That motive, I confess, I felt curious to discover. Then you made love to Sir Arthur Tregenna—I beg your pardon—permitted him to fall in love with you." Katherine smiled once more. "As Sir Arthur had long before been signed, sealed, and delivered over to Lady Cecil Clive, and he seemed powerless to help himself, I felt called upon to help him. He is my friend, you know, so also is his affianced wife. Then you played ghost—oh, yes, you did, Lord Ruysland saw you—and frightened Sir Peter to the verge of insanity. Altogether you were too dangerous a sort of person to be allowed to go on without a short pull-up from some one. Destiny, I suppose, set me on your track—I didn't care about hunting you down, as you call it, and I gave you fair warning. You scorned all I could say; so, as a last resource, I went to London to induce Mr. Otis to

cast his influence into the scale. You have proved more desperate and more dangerous than I supposed. Sir Peter is as nearly mad as it is possible to be, out of a strait-jacket, over his losses. For the last time I come to warn you—you are accused of cheating at cards, of placing a pistol at Sir Peter's head, and threatening his life." Again his listener smiled as she recalled Sir Peter's ghastly face of fright. "It is an actionable matter to carry deadly weapons, and threaten the lives of her majesty's liege subjects. Then you have worn male attire—you have secreted a dangerous lunatic, to the terror of the neighborhood; in short, the list of your evil deeds is appalling. The police of Castleford, armed with a search-warrant, will be here to-day or to-morrow at the furthest to search the premises—you will be arrested, imprisoned, and tried. Miss Herncastle, Miss Dangerfield —I beg you avoid this. Fly while there is yet time, and save yourself."

She looked at him searchingly—earnestly. "Captain O'Donnell, I wonder why—I cannot understand why you should take the trouble to come here and say this. You dislike me with a cordiality there is no mistaking—you have shown me very little quarter hitherto; what object have you in all this? Why should you endeavor to save a woman you hold in aversion and contempt? a woman, in short, whom you hate?"

"Whom I hate!" he repeated quietly. "Since when have I told you I hated you? I do not hate you—very far from it; and if I held you in aversion and contempt I certainly should not take the trouble of coming here to warn you. I have heard Katherine Dangerfield's story—a strange, sad story; and I believe her, even in this hour, to be more sinned against than sinning. She has made one great mistake—she has taken retribution in her own weak hand—she has forgotten who has said 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay!' I believe a great and generous nature has been warped. Commonplace women would have sunk under the blow; being a woman of genius she has risen and battled desperately with fate. And when a woman does that she fails; she must stoop to cunning, to plotting, to guilt. Katherine Dangerfield, I pity you —from my soul I do; and with my whole heart I stand

before you your friend. It is not too late yet; pause, while there is yet time, on the road you are treading, and go back."

There was no mistaking his earnestness, the generous glow of his face, the friendly warmth of his tone. She had turned away from him and was looking out at the golden morning sky.

"Go back!" she repeated bitterly. "Is there ever any going back in this world? Six years ago I might have listened; to-day it is too late."

"It is never too late while life remains. It is only the turning-point in your destiny. As yet you have been guilty only of follies—not of crimes. Katherine"—her face flushed all over as he pronounced the name. She turned to him a sudden, surprised, grateful glance. "Katherine," he held out his hand, "for what I have said and done in the past forgive me. Let me be your friend, your brother, from this hour. I pity you, I admire you. You have been wonderfully brave and clever. Lay down your arms—give up the fight. Which of us can battle against fate? Give me your hand—give me your promise. I cannot, I will not, leave you until you do."

She covered her face with her hands, her breast heaving, the color burning in her face, moved to the very depths of her soul, with a passion of which he did not dream.

"I am taking Rose to France," he continued, coming nearer, his voice wonderfully gentle. "Come with us—you will be safe there. You have been sadly wronged, I know; but life deals hardly with us all. You know my sister's story—you know how her youth has been wrecked by the same hand that blighted yours. Let that be a bond of sympathy between you. Come with us to France; the friend to whom Rose goes will also shelter you. She means to work for her living, teaching in a French school; drudgery, perhaps, but she insists upon it, and I think myself labor is an antidote to heart-break. Come, Katherine—you have fought long and well, and nothing has come of it. Give it up and come with Rose."

Her hands dropped from her face; something in the last words seemed to rouse her. She looked at him steadily.

"And nothing has come of it?" she repeated. That is your mistake, Captain O'Donnell. Something has come of it. I wonder what you would say if I told you—what?"

"Tell me and see."

"I confess," she went on, "to all the crimes laid to my charge. I am Katherine Dangerfield; I have been buried and risen from the dead, and with that resurrection my nature seemed to change. I have brooded on one subject—my wrongs—until I believe my brain has turned. I fled from the house of my true and loyal friend, Henry Otis, and went to America. I became the New York actress you so cleverly recognized. From New York I wrote to Mr. Otis. I told him if Gaston Dantree died, to bury him decently—if he lived, to furnish him with money to quit England; if he lived, and reason did not return, as he feared, to send him to Bracken Hollow—not to an asylum. I wanted him cared for; I had heard horrible stories of insane asylums. I knew Hannah would be good to him for my sake. When all hope was at an end, Mr. Otis obeyed, and for nearly five years poor Gaston Dantree has been the ghost of Bracken Hollow. As a rule he is quiet and harmless, but there are times when his cries are terrible, when he tries to escape from his room. He has to be watched unceasingly. All these years I remained in the New World I worked hard in my profession, and rose. I made money and I hoarded it like a miser. Day and night, stronger and stronger with each year grew the determination to return, to keep my vow. I tell you I believe there were times when I was insane on this subject. Death alone could have held me back. I waited patiently while burning with impatience; I worked; I hoarded, and at last my day came. I returned to England; I made my way into the family of Sir Peter Dangerfield; my revenge had begun.

"That, as you know, is not many weeks ago. It was a losing game from the first—I was playing to lose. I knew my secret could not remain undiscovered, but I dared all. Fate had taken my part in one way. I had a double motive in returning—one, my vengeance on him; the other, to discover my parentage. I had a clue; and

strange to say, in working out one I was working out the other. You know what followed—I played ghost—Lord Ruysland was right—and terrified the master of Searswood as I think he was never terrified before. I paid midnight visits to Bracken Hollow; I dared not go in the daytime. You remember all about that, no doubt. There was an unused entrance by which I came in and out. Lady Dangerfield tyrannized over and insulted me from the first; I have rewarded her, I think. And I have personated Gaston Dantree, and won Sir Peter's idolized gold. Why I personated Dantree I hardly know. Sir Peter was too blind to recognize me, and the whim seized me. How long I might have gone on, how it would have ended but for your recognition of me—your suspicion and discoveries, I don't know. I owe you no grudge; you were doing your duty, and I honor you for it. For Sir Arthur, you need not have been so much afraid; it was a triumph to take him from Lady Cecil—to anger Lady Dangerfield; but bad as I am, I don't think I ever was base enough to marry him, even if he had asked me. He had never wronged me, and I only waged war with those who did."

"You waged war with Lady Cecil Clive, in taking her lover from her, and she certainly never wronged you. She was your friend through all."

The hard look came over her face once more, a hard light in her large eyes.

"Was she? In your eyes, of course, Lady Cecil can do no evil. But what if I told you she had done me the deepest, the deadliest wrong of all?"

He looked at her in surprise.

"I don't understand," he said, a little coldly. "I believe Lady Cecil to be incapable of wilfully wronging any one. And she always spoke gently of you."

She leaned her forehead on her hands, and pushed back her hair with a long, tired sigh.

"What a mockery, what a satire it all is—the world and the people in it! We are all sinners, but I wonder what I have done that my life should be so accursed? Redmond O'Donnell, this morning I felt almost happy—a fierce, triumphal sort of happiness—I had fought a long, bitter battle, but the victory was with me at last.

Now, if I could lie down here and die I should ask no greater boon. My life has been from first to last a dreary, miserable failure. Oh, God! I want to do right. My life has been bitter, bitter, bitter, and I feel as though I were steeped in crime to the lips. If I could only die and end it all! But death passes the guilty and miserable by, and takes the happy and the good."

Her folded arms were lying on the table, her head fell forward on them as though she never cared to lift it again. From first to last she had been a creature of impulse, swayed by a passionate, undisciplined heart—a ship adrift on a dark sea, without rudder or compass.

"There have been days in my life—in the years that are gone—aye, in the weeks that I have spent yonder at Scarswood—when I have held the laudanum in my hand, to my lips, that would have ended it all. But I did not dare die—such wretches as I don't. It was not death I feared—but what comes after. Captain O'Donnell," she lifted her haggard eyes and looked at him, and to the last day of his life the hopeless despair of that face—the hopeless pathos of that voice haunted him, "what must you think of me? What a lost, degraded creature I must be in your sight!"

He took both her hands in his, a compassion such as he had never felt for any human being before stirring his heart.

"What am I that I should judge? And if I thought so, would I ask you to be the companion, the sister of my sister? There is nothing but pity for you in my heart—nothing. Give up this dark and dangerous life, and be true to yourself—to the noble nature Heaven has given you, once more."

She rose up—her hand still in his, a sort of inspiration shining in her face.

"I will!" she answered. "You—whom I thought my enemy, shall save me. I renounce it—the plotting—the evil—the revenge. And for your sake—for the love you bear her, I will spare her."

He looked at her in mute inquiry. She smiled, drew away her hands, and resumed her seat.

"You do not understand. See here. Captain O'Don-

nen, I told you, did I not, my second object in returning to England was to discover my parentage? Well, I have discovered it."

"You have!" he cried breathlessly.

"I have discovered it. My father lives, and the daughter of my nurse occupies my place in his heart, the name I should bear. It is a very old story—changed at nurse—and that nurse has confessed all."

"You have done this! Then I congratulate you, indeed! You will go to your father at once, of course! No one, believe me, can rejoice at this more sincerely than I."

"You mistake. I will never go. This morning I had intended—but that is all past now. If I renounce my revenge and wrong-doing in one way, I renounce it in all. I never understood half-measures."

"But there is wrong-doing here—it is right—it is your duty to go."

"Captain O'Donnell, don't you see another is in my place? My going would bring shame, and disgrace, and misery upon her. My father is a very proud man—would it add to his pride or happiness to acknowledge such a daughter as I?"

"All that has nothing to do with it," the chasseur answered, with his stubborn sense of right and wrong. "Your duty is to go to your father, and tell him the truth at any cost to his pride or yours."

She smiled.

"I wonder if this would be your advice if—if, for example—my father were the Earl of Ruysland? I name him, you understand, as the first I think of. Suppose I went to him and said: 'My lord, I, Katherine Dangerfield—Helen Herncastle—Gaston Dantree—any alias you please—am your daughter; she whom you call Lady Cecil Clive is but the daughter of your former servant, my nurse. She hated your dead wife, my mother, and when you came to claim your child she gave you hers.' Suppose I said this—suppose I could prove it—what then? Would the earl clasp me to his bosom in a gush of parental love? Would Lady Cecil get down from her pedestal of birth and rank and let me mount? Think of the earl's shame and pain—her suffering—Sir Arthur

Tregenna's humiliation; think how much happiness I, the usurper, enjoy. Bring the case home, and tell me still, if you can—to go."

"I tell you still to go. Right is right. Though the Earl of Ruysland were your father, though Lady Cecil had usurped your place, I should still say go—tell the truth, be the cost what it may."

"You, who love Lady Cecil, give me this advice? Captain O'Donnell, you don't love her."

"I love her so well that I leave her; I love her so well that if the thing you speak of were possible, I would be the first to go and tell her. Once again—in the face of all that may follow—I repeat, go! Tell the truth, take the place and name that are yours, and let me help you if I can."

But still she sat keeping that strange, wistful, searching gaze on his face.

"You love her so well that you leave her," she repeated dreamily; "you leave her because she is an earl's daughter and you think above you. If you knew her to be poor—poor and low-born——"

"I would still leave her. It would make no difference. Poor or rich, gentle or simple, who am I that I should marry a wife? My soldier's life in camp and desert does well enough for me. How would I do, think you, for one brought up as Lady Cecil Clive has been? I can rough it well enough—the life suits me; but I shall never care to see my wife rough it, also. Let us pass all that—I don't care to talk of myself. Lady Cecil Clive is not for me—any more than one of her majesty's daughters. Let us speak only of you."

She rose up with a strange, unfathomable smile, crossed the room without a word, lit a candle, and placed it on the table before him. He watched her in silent surprise. She drew from her pocket a folded paper, and handed it to him.

"You have done greater service than you dream of in coming here," she said. "Do one last favor. I want this paper destroyed. I have a whimsical fancy to see you do it. Hold it to the candle and let it burn."

He took it doubtfully. He read the superscription:

"Confession of Harriet Harman," and hesitated. "I don't know—why should I? What is this?"

"Nothing that concerns any one on earth but myself. You will be doing a good deed, I believe, in destroying it. Let me see you burn it. I can do it, of course; but, as I said, I have a fancy that yours should be the hand to destroy it. Burn it, Captain O'Donnell."

Still wondering—still doubting—he obeyed. Held the paper in the flame of the candle until it dropped in a charred cloud on the table. Then she held out her hand to him with a brave bright smile.

"Once more I thank you. You have done me a great service. You have saved me from myself. When do you and your sister leave?"

"To-day; but if I can aid you in any way—if I can take you to your father——'

"You are ready to do it, I know; but I have not quite made up my mind about that yet. It is not a thing to be done in a hurry. Give me a few hours. Come back if you will before you depart, and if you have any influence with the Earl of Ruysland, don't let him send that search-warrant to-day. Let us say good-by, and part for the present."

He stood and looked at her doubtfully. He felt vaguely that never had he been farther from understanding her than at this moment.

"I will come," he said, "and I hope—I trust by that time you will have made up your mind to return to your father, and—if Rose wishes it—may I bring her to see him?"

"Certainly—he will not know her—poor fellow. He knows nobody. Farewell, Redmond O'Donnell—my friend."

There was a lingering tenderness in her voice, in her eyes, that might have told him her secret. But men are totally blind sometimes. He saw nothing. He grasped her hand. "Not farewell," he said. "Au revoir."

She went with him to the door. She watched him with wistful eyes out of sight.

"Farewell," she said softly; "farewell forever. If Henry Otis had been to me what you are, six years ago I had been saved."

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT NIGHT.

Three hours later, and Redmond and Rose O'Donnell had quitted Scarswood Park forever. The last farewells had been said—to Lady Dangerfield, weeping feebly, not so much at their loss as over the general distress and misery that was falling upon the place, the dread of her own fortune. To Lady Cecil, cold and white and still, giving her parting kiss to the sister—her parting hand-clasp and look to the brother. "Farewell forever, my love—my love—who loved me once," that long, wistful, hopeless glance said. To Lord Ruysland, politely affable and full of regrets to the last.

"Confound Mrs. Everleigh and her masquerade ball, and doubly, trebly confound Miss Herncastle for persuading Ginevra to go. The only consolation is we'll have her on the hip before night falls."

"And even that consolation I must ask your lordship to forego," O'Donnell said, with a half-smile. "I have been to see Miss Herncastle. And there is no need of that search-warrant, my lord. I believe you are at liberty to enter and go through Bracken Hollow as freely as you please—if you only wait until to-morrow."

"My good fellow, do you know what you are saying? Wait with such an arch-traitress as that! Wait! give her time to make her escape, and carry off her victim—her prisoner, whoever it may be, and start life luxuriously in London or Paris, under a new alias, and with poor Sir Peter's money. My dear O'Donnell, you're a sensible fellow enough in the main, but don't you think this last suggestion of yours betrays slight symptoms of softening of the brain?"

"My lord—no. You see, I know Miss Herncastle's story and you don't—that makes the difference."

"Gad!" his lordship responded, "I am not sure that I care to know any more than I do. If her previous history be in keeping with its sequel here, it must be an

edifying autobiography. Is her name Herncastle, or what?"

"Her name is not Herncastle. I do not know what it is. I believe she does not know herself. My lord, she is greatly to be pitied; she has gone wrong, but circumstances have driven her wrong. The bitter cynic who defines virtue as only the absence of temptation was right, as cynics very generally are. In her place, I believe I would have done as she has done—aye, worse. Life has dealt hardly with her—hardly—hardly. I tell you so; and to lean too greatly to the side of pity for the erring is not my weakness. Gaston Dantree is the ghost and prisoner of Bracken Hollow. She has confessed; but I believe he is well and kindly treated; and if, instead of caring for him there, she had left him to die like a dog in a ditch, she would only have given him his deserts. She had taken—fairly or unfairly, as you will; I don't know—a large sum of money from Sir Peter Dangerfield; but I say there, too, she has served him right. In her place I would have taken every farthing if I could. She had done wrong in the matter of the ball, but even then, treated as Lady Dangerfield daily treated her, I don't say I would not have done the same. From first to last I maintain Miss Herncastle has been more sinned against than sinning, and so your lordship would acknowledge if you knew all."

His eyes were flashing, his dark face flushed with an earnestness that rarely broke through the indolent calm of long habit and training. His lordship stood and stared at him aghast.

"Good Heaven!" he said, "what rhodomontade is this? Is the woman a witch? and have you fallen under her spells at last? And I would acknowledge all this if I knew all. Then, my dear fellow, in the name of common sense tell me all, for I'll be hanged if I can make top or tail of this. Who, in Heaven's name, is this greatly wronged—much-to-be-pitied Miss Herncastle?"

"Perhaps I ought to tell you—and yet it is such a marvelous story——"

"Egad! I know that beforehand; everything connected with this extraordinary young woman is marvelous.

Whatever it is, it cannot be much more marvelous than what has gone before."

"My lord," O'Donnell said hastily, "I see my sister waiting, and I have no time to spare. Here is a proposal: don't go near Bracken Hollow until to-morrow, until you have heard from me. Before I leave Castleford I will find time to write you the whole thing; I really don't care to tell it, and when you have read her story, I believe I only do you justice in saying you will let Miss Herncastle alone. I have reason to think she will leave Castleford to-day with my sister and me—that she will share Rose's asylum in France, and that all her evil doings are at an end. To-night you shall have my letter—to-morrow do as you please. Once more, my lord, farewell."

He lifted his hat and sprang down the steps to where Rose sat in the basket-carriage awaiting him. Once he glanced back—he half-smiled to see his lordship standing petrified where he had left him. He glanced up at a particular window. A face, that dead and in its coffin would never look whiter, watched him there. He waved his hand—the ponies flung up their heads and dashed down the avenue; in a moment Scarswood lay behind them like a place in a dream.

There was not one word spoken all the way. Once Rose, about to speak, had glanced at her brother's face, and the words died on her lips. Did he love Lady Cecil, after all—had he loved her vainly for years?

They went to the Silver Rose. Miss O'Donnell had her former room, and there, wrenching himself from the bitterness and pain of his own loss, he told her the story of Gaston Dantree.

"If you would like to see him, now is your time," he said. "I am going to Bracken Hollow. You can come if you like."

She listened in pale amaze, shrinking and trembling as she heard. An idiot for life! At the horror of that fate all her wrongs paled into insignificance—what awful retribution was here? She rose up ashen gray with pity and horror, but tearless and quiet.

"I will go," she answered.

He procured a fly, and they started at once. Again it

was a very silent drive. Redmond O'Donnell forced his thoughts from his own troubles—brooding on hopeless loss of any kind was not his nature—and thought of Katherine. He almost wondered at himself at the pity he felt for her—at the sort of admiration and affection she had inspired him with. How brave she was, how resolute, how patient; what wonderful self-command was hers. What elements for a noble and beautiful life warped and gone wrong. But it was not yet too late; the courage, the generosity, the nobility within her would work for good from henceforth. He would take her to France, her better nature would assert itself. She would one day become one of these exceptionally great women whom the world delights to honor. She—he paused. They had drawn up at the gate, and standing there with folded arms, with rigidly compressed lips, with eyes that looked like gleaming steel, stood Henry Otis.

The Algerian soldier knew him at once, and knew the instant he saw him something had gone wrong. As he advanced with his sister, Mr. Otis flung open the gate, took off his hat to the sister, and abruptly addressed the brother.

"I have the honor of speaking to Captain Redmond O'Donnell?"

"I am Captain O'Donnell, Mr. Otis," was the calm answer. "I come here with my sister by Miss Herncastle's permission."

"I inferred that. This is your second visit to-day?"

"My second visit," O'Donnell added, secretly wondering why the man should assume that belligerent attitude and angry tone. "I trust Miss Herncastle is here? I came expecting to meet her."

"Miss Herncastle is not here!" Otis replied, his eyes glancing their irate, steely fire; "she has gone."

"Gone!"

"Gone—fled—run away. That would not surprise me; but this does." He struck angrily an open letter he held. "Captain O'Donnell, what have you been saying to her—what influence do you possess over her that she should resign the triumph of her life, in the hour of its fulfilment, for you? By what right do you presume to come here, and meddle with what in no way concerns you?"

Redmond O'Donnell stood and looked at him, his straight black brows contracting, his voice sinking to a tone ominously low and calm.

"Rose," he said, "step in here and wait until I rejoin you." She obeyed with a startled look. "Now, then, Mr. Otis, let us understand one another; I don't comprehend one word you are saying, but I do comprehend that you have taken a most disagreeable tone. Be kind enough to change it to one a little less aggressive, and to make your meaning a little more clear."

"You don't understand?" Otis repeated, still with suppressed anger. "Have you not been the one to counsel her to renounce the aim of her life, to resign her birthright because, forsooth, the woman who has usurped it is your friend? Have you not been the one to urge this flight—to compel this renunciation?"

"My good fellow," O'Donnell cried impatiently, "if you intend to talk Greek, talk it, but don't expect me to understand. And I never was clever at guessing riddles. If Miss Herncastle has run away, I am sincerely sorry to hear it—it is news to me. What you mean about renouncing her birthright and all that, you may know—I don't. I urged her to give up the life of falsehood and deception she has been leading lately for one more worthy of her, and I understood her to say she would. The influence I possess over her is only the influence any true friend might possess. Further than that, if you want me to know what you are talking about, you will be kind enough to explain."

And Henry Otis, looking into the dark, gravely haughty face, knew that he spoke the truth. He handed him the letter.

"It is from her," he said, "to me. Read it."

O'Donnell obeyed. It bore date that day, and was significantly brief.

"HENRY—MY BROTHER: You will be surprised—pained, angered, it may be—when I tell you I am going, and coming back no more. I give it all up—all the plotting, the weary, wicked, endless scheming that brought revenge perhaps, but never happiness. And the confession is burned! They shall never know—neither my fa-

ther, nor she who has taken my place unwittingly, shall ever be rendered miserable by the truth. I can remember now that she at least was ever gentle and sweet to me. If I told them to-morrow, I could not, would not, take her place; my father would never care for me—would look upon me as a shame and disgrace. Let it go with all the rest. Captain O'Donnell has proven himself my friend; for his sake I renounce my cherished vengeance. Let the miserable woman we have lured here go. Care for poor Gaston as you have always cared. Do not follow me; when happier days come I will go to you. Do not fear for me; I will not return to the stage; I shall live honestly and uprightly for the time that is to come, God helping me. Sir Peter Dangerfield's money is in Hannah's keeping; restore it to him; I would die sooner than use it. Tell Captain O'Donnell that while I thank him—thank him with all my heart and soul—I still cannot go with him. For my own sake I cannot. He has been my salvation; to my dying day his memory and yours will be the dearest in my heart. Dear Henry, my best friend, my dearest brother, farewell! I have been a trouble, a distress to you, from the first; this last flight will trouble and distress you most of all; but it is for the best—the rest never were. Farewell! KATHERINE."

Redmond O'Donnell looked up from the letter with a face of pale wonder.

"What does she mean?" he asked. "'Dare not come with me for her own sake!' What folly is this?"

Henry Otis returned his glance gloomily enough. He understood, if O'Donnell did not.

"Who can comprehend a woman—least of all such a woman as Katherine Dangerfield? But for once she shall be disobeyed. For six years I have obeyed her in good and in evil; now I refuse to obey longer. The truth shall be told—yes, by Heaven!—let their pride suffer as it may. They shall know that the girl upon whom they trampled is of their blood! He, with all his dignity and mightiness, shall find she is his daughter!"

"Who?" O'Donnell asked, with a piercing glance. But Henry Otis moodily drew back.

"Yonder is Hannah—if you want to see the miserable

wretch hidden for five years at Bracken Hollow, you had better go. I shall tell him, not you."

His angry jealousy flashed out in every look, in every word. He hated this man—this dark, dashing, Irish soldier—with his magnificent stature, his handsome, dusky face. Katherine loved him! Was it part of her wretched destiny always to love men utterly indifferent to her, while he—all his life it seemed to him he had lain his heart at her feet, and it had been less to her than the ground she trod.

He turned away from him in a passion of wrath against her, against the tall, haughty, amazed chasseur, against himself and his infatuation, and dashed into the belt of gloomy woodland that shut in the gloomy house.

"I'll tell, at least!" he thought savagely. "I'll humble the Earl of Ruysland; and for her—let her resent it if she will. I have been her puppet long enough. While she cared for no one more, I hoped against hope, but now that she has fallen in love with this Irish free-lance, let her go. My slavery ends from to-day."

O'Donnell looked after him, angry in his turn—then, glancing at his watch and seeing that time was flying, he rejoined his sister waiting anxiously in the porch.

"Who is that man, Redmond?" she asked timidly—"were you quarreling? How angry he looked!"

"I was not quarreling," he answered shortly. "Rose, we have no time to spare. See this man if you will, and let us go. I want to catch the five-o'clock train."

Old Hannah was in waiting—she, too, looked gloomy and forbidding. Her nursling had fled—in some way this young man had to do with it, and Hannah resented it accordingly. He saw it, and asked no question—he felt no inclination to subject himself to further rebuffs. Let them all go—he did not understand them—he washed his hands from henceforth of the whole affair.

Hannah in silence led the way up a dark, spiral staircase to an upper room. She cautiously inserted a key and unlocked the door.

"Make no noise," she said, in a whisper; "he's asleep."

She softly opened the door and led the way in. They followed, Rose clinging to her brother's arm—white, trembling from head to foot. She was led to a bed;

upon it a figure lay, asleep, motionless. A hot mist was before her eyes; for a moment she could not look; then it cleared away. She strove to command herself, and for the first time in seven years Rose Marie Dantree looked upon her husband's face.

There was nothing revolting or terrible in the sight. As he lay asleep all the old beauty was there—the calm, the peace. One arm supported his head—he was neither worn nor thin—he had changed very little. The classic profile was turned toward them—the long, black lashes swept his cheeks, the lips were parted in something like a smile, the glossy black, curling hair was swept off the forehead. He looked beautiful as he lay there asleep. And over Rose's heart the old love surged—the great wrong he had done her was forgotten—she only remembered she had been his wife, and that he had loved her once. Her face worked—she sank on her knees.

"Gaston! Gaston!" she whispered, growing ghastly.

He started in his sleep—the dark, large sunken eyes opened and looked at her. As she met them, the last trace of life left her face—she sank backward—her brother caught her as she fell.

"I might have known it would be too much for her," he said. "I should never have let her come."

She was on the grass outside the gate when she recovered, her brother bathing her forehead and holding her in his arms. She looked up into his eyes, burst into a sudden passion of crying, and hid her face on his breast. He was very patient and gentle with her—he let her cry in peace. Presently he stooped and kissed her.

"If you are ready we will go now, Rose," he said. "You must not see him again. It can do no good—his case is hopeless—he knows no one, and when he is disturbed he gives trouble, the old woman says. Come, Rose, be brave—it is hard on you, but life is hard on all of us. Since we must bear our troubles, let us at least bear them bravely."

She went without a word. She drew her veil over her face, and cried silently behind it. They reached the Silver Rose; Lanty and the luggage were here. The luggage was ready for the railway, but Lanty was nowhere to be seen. The sound of voices in the court-

yard, however, guided his master—Mr. Lafferty's mellifluous Northern accent was not to be mistaken.

"See now—that I may niver sin—God pardin me for swearin'—but I'll come back to ye—an' maybe marry ye—if I don't see anybody I like better. Arrah! where's the good av' cryin' and screechin' in this way? Shure me own heart's broke intirely—so it is. An' thin ye can write to me when I'm away; an' isn't that same a comfort? Faith! it's a beautiful hand ye write—aquil to iver a schoolmaster in Ballynahaggart. An' ye'll dait yer letthers in this way: 'Misther Lanty Lafferty, in care o' the Masther. In Furrin parts.' Arrah! hould yer noise, an' don't be fetchin' the parish down on us. Far or near, amn't I ready to stick to ye, Shusan, through thick an' thin? Arrah, is it doubtin' me ye are? See now, it's the truth I'm tellin'; that I may go to my grave feet foremost if it isn't."

Mr. Lafferty and the rosy-cheeked barmaid were ensconced behind a tree, Lanty seated on the pump, Susan dissolved in tears—a love-scene, undoubtedly. Susan's reply was inaudible, but her lover might be heard by any one who chose to listen.

"Why don't I lave him, is it? Upon me conscience, thin, it's long and many's the day ago I'd av left him wid his sodgerin' an' his thrampin', if I cud have found iver a dacent Irish boy to thrust him wid. But there it was, ye see—av a bullet from a rifle, or a poke from a pike cut his sodgering short, I was always to the fore to close the corpse's eyes, an' wake him comfortably, and see that he had a headstone over him, as a dacent O'Donnell should. But, shure—this is a saycret, mind—her ladyship, good luck to her! has him now, or will shortly; an' troth if he's half as unaisy, an' half as troublesome on her hands as he is on mine, it's hersilf'll be sick an' sore av her bargain. An' it's on me two knees I'd go to ye this minute, me darlin', av it wasn't owin' to the dampness of the grass, an' the rheumatism that does be troublin' me in the small av me back, an' ax ye there, forninst me, av ye'll be Misthress Lafferty. And faith! it's not to more than half a dozen young women livin' I'd say the like."

"Lanty! I say, you scoundrel, do you want to be late?"

called the voice of his master. "Come along here—there's not a minute to lose."

"Oh, tare an' ages! Shure there he is himself! Give us a kiss, Shusan, me darlin' av the wurruld, an' long life to ye till I come back."

There was the very audible report of a very audible embrace, and then Mr. Lafferty in great haste made his appearance round the angle of the building.

"Comin', sir—comin', yer honor. Niver fear, but I'll be in time. I'll be at the station below in a pig's whisper."

There was barely time to attend to the luggage, pay the bill, and drive to the station. They caught the train, and no more. There had been no opportunity of writing his lordship the explanation he had promised. It must be postponed until their arrival in London.

"I may as well tell him all, and entreat him to let her alone. Even Sir Peter, when he learns who she is, and receives his money back, will hardly care to further persecute Katherine Dangerfield. And she dare not go with me for her own sake! Hum—m—I don't understand that."

It was late when the lights of the great metropolis flashed before them. They drove at once to a quiet family hotel, and, late as it was, Captain O'Donnell sat to write and post the promised letter to Lord Ruysland. He told him at length of the story of his suspicions, of the night visit to Bracken Hollow, when his lordship had seen him accompany Miss Herncastle home, of the scar on the temple, of the opening of the grave—of the "confirmation strong as Holy Writ"—the accumulated evidence which had proven her Katherine Dangerfield.

"Her sins have been forced upon her," he wrote; "her virtues are her own. In the hour of her triumph she resigns all—confesses all, and sends back the money won to Sir Peter Dangerfield. She has gone—let her go in peace. She has suffered enough to expiate even greater wrong-doing than hers. I believe she has made a much greater renunciation—I believe she has destroyed, or caused me to destroy, the paper that would have proved her birthright. It was superscribed 'Confession of Harriet Harman,' and now that I have had time to think

over her words, I believe that confession proved her parentage. As I understand her, this Harriet Harman was her nurse, and for some reason of her own, placed another child in her stead, took her from England, and in France gave her to Sir John Dangerfield. Her assertion of her claims, she said, could bring nothing but misery—pain and shame to her father—suffering and disgrace to her who stood in her place. So in the hour of its fruition she deliberately destroyed her last hope, and has gone forth into the world to labor for her bread, leaving another to usurp her name and station. Sacrifice less great has been made, and called itself martyrdom. If you ever meet her again, my lord—be her friend as I would have been, had she allowed me."

The dawn was gray in the August sky as Captain O'Donnell posted this letter. Two hours later, as he sat at their early breakfast with his sister, the cab that was to carry them to London Bridge station waiting at the door, one of the small boys telegraph offices employ, approached him with an ominous yellow envelope in his hand. O'Donnell tore it open—it was a cable message—dated New Orleans, and in a dozen words changed the whole tenor of his life.

"REDMOND O'DONNELL: My wife and son are dead. For God's sake come to me at once and fetch Rose.

"LOUIS DE LANSAC."

Lord Ruysland, without knowing why, obeyed Redmond O'Donnell, and postponed that forcible visit to Bracken Hollow.

"It isn't like O'Donnell to be swayed by any sentimental impulse," his lordship mused; "he generally has some sound reason for what he does and says. I wonder what he meant by that profession of sympathy and compassion, and the rest of it. She is a fine woman—an uncommonly fine woman; but the big chasseur isn't the sort to be influenced by that. I'll wait until I get his letter, at least; and upon my life I hope I'll get it soon, for I feel as curious as a woman."

He was taking a gentle evening constitutional around the big fish-pond, feeling very much bored, and waiting

for the dinner-bell. Men and women around him might sin and separate, love and part, but all that was over and done with long ago with the Right Honorable the Earl of Ruysland. Life flowed on, a tranquil river—its only ripple duns and digestion; passion and he had long ago shaken hands and parted. The house was insufferably dull; O'Donnell, his sister, Sir Arthur, and Sir Peter gone; Lady Dangerfield in alternate fits of tears, hysterics, scolding, and sulks; and his daughter moving about the rooms in her light, shining summer dress, more like some pale spirit of a dead Lady Cecil than her living self.

"Life has a natural tendency to the contraries," his lordship moralized plaintively; "human nature inclines to the zigzag. Now, why, in Heaven's name, must Ginevra, gifted with the average of woman's cunning—quarrel with her lord and master—defy Sir Peter, and involve herself and all her relations in trouble? Why can't Queenie bloom and smile as the affianced bride of one of the richest young baronets in the United Kingdom should, instead of fading away to a shadow? Why need O'Donnell ever have crossed her path again? I know she is in love with that fellow. Isn't the world big enough for him without coming to Castleford? And, finally, why couldn't Miss Herncastle have selected some other peaceable country family to play her devilish pranks on as well as this? Life's a game of contraries, I repeat—it reminds one of the child's play: 'When I say Hold Fast, You Let Go!' Ah, good evening, sir; do you wish to speak to me?"

Lord Ruysland lifted his hat blandly. For the last two or three minutes he had been watching a tall young man approaching him—a perfect stranger—with the evident intention of speaking. As he paused before him, his débonair lordship took the initiative, lifted his beaver, and addressed him.

"You wish to speak to me, sir?" he repeated suavely.

"I wish to speak to you, if, as I think, you are the Earl of Ruysland."

"I am the Earl of Ruysland, and I have the honor of addressing——"

"My name is Henry Otis. Six years ago I was Doctor

Graves' assistant and medical practitioner in Castleford. If your lordship has ever heard the story of Katherine Dangerfield, you may also have heard of me."

Lord Ruysland's double eye-glass went up to Lord Ruysland's light-blue, short-sighted, English eyes, and Lord Ruysland replied, with the languid drawl of English high life:

"Ah, Katherine Dangerfield, that ubiquitous young woman again. Um, yaas, I have heard the story of Katherine Dangerfield until the mere sound of her name grows a bore. I have also heard in connection with that very tiresome young person the name of—aw—Mr. Henry Otis. Now, may I ask what Mr. Otis can have to say on this—er—threadbare subject, and why he feels called upon to say it to me?"

"For the best reason in the world—that I believe your lordship has the honor of being Katherine Dangerfield's father."

Like a bolt from a bow—like a bullet whizzing from a rifle, the truth came. And Henry Otis folded his arms and stood before the noble peer with a grimly triumphant face.

"Your daughter!" he repeated. "You understand, my lord, your only daughter. For the past twenty years your lordship has been laboring under a monstrous delusion. Katherine Dangerfield was your daughter."

No shadow of change came over the earl's placid face. With his eye-glass still up, he stood and stared calmly at Henry Otis.

"You're not a lunatic, I suppose," he said meaningly. "You don't look as though you were. Still, you'll excuse me if I venture to doubt your perfect sanity. Have you any more remarks of this extraordinary nature to make? For if you have"—he pulled out his watch—"my time is limited. In ten minutes the dinner-bell will ring, and it is one of the few fixed principles I have taken the trouble to retain, never to be late for dinner."

"My lord," Henry Otis said, "you do not believe me, of course—what I say cannot sound otherwise than mad and presumptuous, and yet it is true. I beg of you to listen to me—I happen to be able to prove what I say. Carry

your mind back twenty years, and tell me if you happen to remember Harriet Harman?"

"I remember Harriet Harman perfectly well. Will you pardon me, Mr. Otis, if I say I think you are troubling yourself greatly with what in no way concerns you, and what I have no desire to hear?"

"By Heaven, my lord, you shall hear!" Henry Otis cried, his sallow face whitening with anger; "if not in private here, then in the public print. I am not mad, though my assertion must sound like madness to you. I can prove what I say. Twenty years ago, when Harriet Harman gave you the child you came to claim, she gave you—not the daughter of the late Countess of Ruysland, but her own."

There was five seconds' blank silence. The face of Henry Otis was white, his pale eyes flashing. For the earl—not a muscle of his well-trained countenance twitched, not a shadow of change came over his high-bred face. His eye-glass was still held to his eyes, his thin lips set themselves a trifle more closely—that was all.

In the surprise of the moment, in the suddenness of the interview, both had forgotten where they were. Neither saw a slender figure in white dinner dress, a white lace mantilla thrown over its head, that had descended from the portico and approached over the velvet turf. The last words of Henry Otis reached her. She stopped as if shot. The memorable King's Oak was near—under its dark, wide shadow she stood still to listen.

"This is a marvelous statement, Mr. Otis," the peer said, with perfect calm. "Will you pardon me once more if I find it impossible to believe it? Harriet Harman gave me her child instead of mine twenty years ago! What egregious nonsense is this—taken second-hand from one of last century's romances? I can only wonder at a gentleman of your good sense repeating it."

"Taken from a romance, or what you please, my lord," Henry Otis said doggedly; "but true—true as heaven is above us. Harriet Harman swore vengeance upon your wife for separating her from her lover, and that vengeance she wreaked on her child. I repeat it—she changed them. Her child was a month old when yours was born—your lordship knew or cared nothing about it—never

saw it until it was given to you as your own. You saw nothing of your own either from the day of its birth. Again I repeat, when you returned to England and Mrs. Harman, she gave you her own daughter and retained yours. The young lady whom you have brought up, whom you call Lady Cecil Clive, is in reality Katherine Harman."

There was a sobbing cry from beneath the tree. Neither heard it. His lordship made a step forward.

"You villain!" he said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper; "by Heaven! I'll throttle you if you repeat that lie!"

"It is the truth," Henry Otis retorted, in cold disdain. "I can prove it. Harriet Harman is here—ready to swear to what I say."

"And do you think I would believe her oath if she did!" Lord Ruysland cried; but his face grew a dreadful livid gray as he said it. "This is some nefarious plot got up between you to extort money, no doubt, but——"

He stopped. Henry Otis turned his back upon him in contempt.

"I see it is useless talking to you. A court of law, perhaps, will be more easily convinced. Harriet Harman is here, and ready to repeat the story. Once more I assert Katherine Dangerfield is your daughter—she who is known as the Lady Cecil Clive is not. Before you are a week older I think even your incredulity will be staggered. I have the honor to wish your lordship good evening. There is the dinner-bell. As your lordship's fixed principles are so few, don't let me be the man to infringe the most important of them."

He lifted his hat in mocking salute and turned to go. But his lordship strode forward, and caught him by the shoulder.

"Stay!" he said, in a ringing tone of command. "You have said either too much or too little. Why do you repeat Katherine Dangerfield is my daughter? Katherine Dangerfield is dead."

Mr. Otis smiled, and drew himself away.

"I decline to say more to your lordship at present. I tell you the truth, and you accuse me of a lie. That is sufficient. Harriet Harman is at Bracken Hollow—either

to-night or to-morrow your lordship can see her there. If you refuse to believe what she says, the matter shall be placed in the hands of justice. Katherine Dangerfield, whether living or dead, shall be avenged."

He paused. During the last five minutes a sudden red, meteorlike light had flashed up in the gray southern sky. While he talked it had steadily increased—brighter and broader—redder and fiercer it grew—it could be only one thing—fire! At that instant there came clashing across the twilight stillness the fire bells of the town—the red light in the sky growing redder and redder.

"Fire!" Henry Otis exclaimed, knitting his brows, "and in that direction. There is no house there but Bracken Hollow. What if that lunatic, Dantree, has got out of his room and succeeded in what he has attempted so often—setting fire to the house!"

Clash! clang! The fire-alarm grew louder, the flames were shooting up into the soft gray sky. One of the grooms came galloping up the avenue, flinging himself out of the saddle at sight of the earl.

"Where's the fire, my man?" Otis called.

"At Bracken Hollow, zur; and it be all ablaze as I coom oop——" But Otis did not wait for the completion of the sentence. With one bound he was on the back of the horse, and dashing down the avenue like the wind.

"I might have known," he said, between his clenched teeth, "what would come of keeping Hannah with Harriet Harman. Dantree has got free, and found the matches, and succeeded at last in what he has failed so often—setting fire to Bracken Hollow."

The horse was a fleet one; he darted onward like an arrow. Ten minutes brought him to Bracken Hollow. There was no wind, but the old house was like tinder, and shriveled up at once. It looked all one sheet of fire as he threw himself off the horse and rushed toward it.

There was a crowd collected, but the fire-engines had not yet arrived. Little use their coming, now. At the instant he appeared old Hannah came rushing headlong out.

"Save him, for Heaven's sake!" she cried, "if ye be men will ye stand there and see a fellow creature burned

to death before your eyes? I've lost the key of her room. Come—come—and burst open the door."

"What is it, Hannah?" called Henry Otis; "where is Dantree and Mrs. Harman?"

"Oh, thank Heaven you're here! Mrs. Harman is locked up in her room now and I can't find the key. Come and break it open, for the Lord's sake. And he is I don't know where—no one has ever seen him yet."

"He has made his escape, no doubt. Stand aside, Hannah, or the woman will be burned to death."

There was an ax in the porch. He seized it and rushed headlong through flames and smoke toward Mrs. Harman's room. Her ringing screams broke over everything now. He struck at the door with all his might, but it was strong, and resisted. "Stand from the door," he shouted to her within, "and be quiet; I will save you." He struck it again and again; it yielded to the fifth blow, and went crashing into the room. She was standing, in spite of his warning, directly opposite; it struck her heavily and felled her to the floor. He sprang in and drew her from beneath. The sharp angle of the oak door had struck her on the head near the temple; a great stream of blood was pouring over her face as he lifted her. The fire was already surging through the open door. He bowed his head over her, and with his burden rushed out of the doomed house.

He laid her on the ground, senseless, bleeding. As he did so a mighty shout arose, then died away in a low moan of horror. Far up on the leads of the blazing building, far beyond all human aid, appeared a wild figure—the figure of a young man—with dark, streaming hair, white face, and black, maniac eyes. It was Gaston Dantree.

The flames shot lurid and crimson up around him, higher than his head. His wild, mad cries of exultation rang shrilly out—his laughter curdled the blood of the listeners. "Ha! ha!" they heard him shout. "I told her I'd do it, and I've done it. Here's a fire, and I'm free, I'm free, I'm free!"

The red flames, the black smoke, hid him from their view; then with a dreadful roar the fire leaped up higher than ever, and the roof fell in with a crash. The strong-

est, the hardest there, turned away and covered their eyes, sick with horror.

Six years before Gaston Dantree had shuddered with vague, nameless fear as he first looked on Bracken Hollow. That presentiment was fulfilled—strangely—terribly. For five years Bracken Hollow had been his prison! —this fearful August evening it was his grave!

CHAPTER XVII.

"NOT I, BUT FATE, HATH DEALT THIS BLOW."

Twelve! by the steeple of Castleford High Street; twelve! by the loud-voiced clock of the Scarswood stables. In the intense, sultry silence of the August night, the sharp, metallic strokes came even into that upper chamber of the Silver Rose, where, upon the big, curtained, old-fashioned four-poster in which Mrs. Vavasor and Rose O'Donnell had both slept, Harriet Harman lay dying.

Dying! No earthly aid could reach her now. The blow of the heavy, iron-studded door had done its work. Doctor Graves went into learned medical details of the injury done the brain, and out of that obscure detail one terrible fact stood clear—she was dying! Katherine had spared her, and in that very hour death had sealed her for his own. Her life of sin, of plotting, of all evil and wrong-doing, was rapidly drawing to a close; the midnight hour booming solemnly through the quiet town was ushering in the eternal night for her.

A smoldering heap of charred and burning ruins was all that remained of Bracken Hollow. To-morrow, among the débris, search would be instituted for the bones of the wretched victim of his own insanity. It had been his mania from the first to escape. Dozens of times he had attempted to fire the house, and old Hannah's constant vigilance had baffled him. Busied with the care of Mrs. Harman, he had been overlooked that day, and the result was his escape from his room, and the consummation of his purpose. The house was enveloped in flames before Hannah was aware. She had lain down to take a nap, and it was the cry of fire, and its dull

roar around, that awoke her. Bewildered by sleep and fear, she lost all presence of mind, forgot her two charges, and rushed forth. What she had done with the key of her latest prisoner's room she could not recollect; the breaking in and fall of the door did the rest.

They were all at the Silver Rose—Henry Otis, old Hannah, Lord Ruysland, and—Lady Cecil Clive. She had glided in among them an hour before—a gray, ashen pallor on her face, a deep, strange horror in her eyes, but calm beyond all telling; she walked alone from Scarswood; she had heard every word of Henry Otis' interview with the earl; she had neither fainted nor fallen; she had only sat down on a primrose knoll, feeling stunned and stupid. In that state she saw Mr. Otis mount the groom's horse and dash away like a madman; she had heard her father call him, and dash after; she saw the red light in the sky, and knew, in a vague, dreamy sort of way, that it was a fire. And then her mind, without any volition of her own, went back and repeated over and over the strange words this strange man had said:

"Lady Cecil Clive is not your daughter—her name is Katherine Harman. The children were changed at nurse—your daughter was Katherine Dangerfield."

"Katherine Dangerfield!" She repeated the name vaguely, pulling the primroses and mechanically arranging them in a bouquet. She felt no pain—no terror—no disbelief—only that stunned numbness. And still her mind persistently took up the tale and repeated it. "Not Lord Ruysland's daughter!—whose, then, was she? This Mrs. Harman he spoke of had been the nurse—and the nurse had given Lord Ruysland her own child. If so, then Mrs. Harman must be her mother. The thread of thought broke here. She arranged the primroses in a different fashion, twisting a blade of grass about the stems. Then, like a flash, memory pinioned her thoughts. Her mother! Her mother, a guilty, lost woman, and she—she not Lord Ruysland's daughter, the upstart usurper of another's rights.

The flowers dropped from her fingers, she started to her feet with a low, wailing cry. No more merciful apathy, no more stupor of mind. Clear as the crimson

light yonder in the twilight sky the whole truth burst upon her. She was not Lord Ruysland's daughter—she was a usurper, and as such about to be shown to the world—no peeress of England, but the child of a guilty, designing servant-woman.

She staggered as she stood, and grasped the branch of a tree. Her hands flew up and covered her face—one heart-broken sob broke from her. She was very proud—sweet, gentle, gracious, all womanly she was, but even that sweet graciousness arose out of her pride. The daughter of a "belted earl" can afford to wear a smile for all less-favored mortals. She had been intensely proud of the name and rank she bore—of the noble line of ancestry stretching back to the Norman Willian; every stone, every tree around dear, old, ivied Clive Court, she loved like living things. Her very pride had made her accept what had galled that pride most—the formal offer of Sir Arthur Tregenna. He bore a name as old, nay older, than her own; the Tregannas had been barons and warriors in the reign of Edward the Confessor—the old glory of the house of Ruysland would be restored by this alliance. Had the man she loved asked her to be his wife, to go with him and share his poverty and obscurity—the chances are, loving him with a desperate, passionate love as she did, she might still have refused him. And now!

Her hands dropped from before her face—she stood cold, and white, and still. It was the righteous punishment of such pride as hers, such selfishness—such an outrage on all that was best and most womanly within her. Of all the men the world held, she loved but one; handsomer, nobler, more talented, had asked her to be their wife, but her heart had been like a stone to all. Redmond O'Donnell she had loved from the first. Redmond O'Donnell she would love until she died. And, with heart full to overflowing with that passionate love, she had yet been ready to become the wife of another man. That man's pride of birth and station was equal to her own—what could he say to this?

"Fire—fire!" The servants were echoing the cry and rushing to the highest points, where they could see it best. It was nothing to her; she drew back behind the

tree, and stood looking blankly, blinding before her. The child of a servant! a usurper! The world seemed rocking under her feet—the trees swimming round. Why had she not died before the truth was told? The night fell—the dew with it; she still stood there, heedless. She heard with preternatural distinctness the loud contending voices of the servants announcing the whereabouts of the fire. The servants! It came to her that she should be one of them—that her birthright had been the servants' hall, not the drawing-room. Strangely enough she had never thought of doubting—she had seen Henry Otis' face—heard his voice, and felt, she knew not how, that he had told the truth.

Presently came a messenger rushing breathless from the town, full of the exciting news. Bracken Hollow was burned to the ground; a man, nobody knew who—burned to death with it, and a woman killed. They had taken the woman to the Silver Rose; she was not quite dead yet, it seemed, and my lord had gone after her, and was there now. The woman's name had leaked out somehow—it was Mrs. Harman.

Mrs. Harman! Her mother! It flashed upon her what Mr. Otis had said—Mrs. Harman had been imprisoned at Bracken Hollow to confess the truth, and now lay dying at the Silver Rose. Her mother! Guilty or not—lost, wretched, abandoned—still her mother. She started up—all stupor, all pride gone forever. She walked to the house—ran up to her own room—threw off her light muslin and costly laces, replaced them by a dress of dark gray, a summer shawl, and hat. Then, five minutes after, was walking rapidly toward the town. She had told no one, Ginevra was absorbed in her own troubles, and there was no time for explanations. An hour before midnight she reached the Silver Rose.

A crowd of the town people were still gathered excitedly before it. A man burned to death—a woman killed—Bracken Hollow in ashes—not often was Castleford so exercised as this. And the dying woman must be somebody of importance, since my lord himself refused to leave the inn until her fate was one way or other decided.

They fell back wondering and respectful as Lady Cecil

Clive drew near. Were they asleep, or awake? Lord Ruysland's only daughter, alone and on foot, in Castleford at this hour. She passed through them all—never seeing them—seeing nothing, it seemed. The soft hazel eyes had a blind, sightless, sleep-waking sort of stare—her face was all drawn and white. In the passage she came face to face with the landlord. The dark, solemn eyes looked at him.

"Lord Ruysland is here," the pale lips said, "take me to him."

The man drew back a step—that nameless something in her colorless face terrified him.

"Take me to him," she repeated, "at once."

He bowed low and led the way. Who was the dying woman up-stairs, that Lord Ruysland and his daughter should trouble themselves like this? He had not seen her face—probably would not have recalled it if he had. His lordship was not in the sick-chamber, but in the little parlor adjoining—the little parlor where, one other night, six years before, Sir John Dangerfield's adopted daughter had waited to see Mrs. Vavasor. He was walking very slowly and softly up and down, his brow knit with a reflective frown—one white, slender hand thrust inside his coat. He looked up, and saw, without warning of any sort, Cecil. He absolutely recoiled—the sight of her, at that hour, in this place, and wearing that face, so startled him that for a second's time he half-doubted if it were not her wraith.

"Queenie!" he gasped.

"Yes, papa—Queenie." She came forward and stood before him. "I was in the grounds," she continued, with perfect abruptness, "very near you, when Mr. Otis came and told you his story. I heard it all. It is true, I suppose, papa?"

He stood silent—speechless—looking at her in wonder and doubt.

"It is true, I suppose?" she repeated.

"What is true?"

"That I am not your daughter—that Katherine Dangerfield was. That I am the daughter of the woman dying in that room."

He was a man ordinarily very chary of caresses, but

he was fond of the girl he had believed his daughter—he was fond of her still. Her beauty and her elegance had gratified his pride; her gentle, tender, winning ways had won his heart—or, at least, as much heart as that noble lord had to win. He took her in his arms now and kissed her.

"My dear," he said, very gently, "I hope you know me well enough to be sure that, whether it is true or false, you will still be the same to me—the daughter I love and am proud of. I wish you need never have heard it; but, since it must come, I am thankful I am not the one to break it to you. It is a very terrible and shocking affair from first to last; I feel almost too stunned to realize it yet."

"It is perfectly true, then?"

"Well—yes, Queenie—I am afraid it is."

Had, all unknown to herself, some dim, shadowy hope still lingered in her breast that it might not be true? The sharpest pang she had felt yet pierced her as she heard his quiet words. With a sort of gasp her head fell on his shoulder and lay there.

"My poor little Queenie," he said tenderly, "it is hard on you. Confound Otis! Why the devil couldn't he keep the nefarious story to himself? I was satisfied—where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise. You are the only daughter I want, and the other poor girl is dead—can't do her any good now. But remember, Queenie, whatever comes of it, I look upon you still as my daughter—all the Otises and Harmans on earth shall not separate you and me. As Sir Arthur Tregenna's wife we can afford to despise their malice."

She shivered slightly at the sound of that name—then she lifted her head and drew herself away from him.

"Papa," she said, "you know why I have come here. If—I mean since she is my mother—I must see her. Oh, papa, I must! She has done a terrible wrong, but she is dying, and"—the agony within her broke into a wailing sob here—"I can't believe it—I can't—unless I hear it from her own lips. Take me to her, papa—please."

"I doubt if she will ever speak to any one in this

world again—still, the doctors say she may. Graves and Otis are with her. I'll ask them if they'll admit you."

He tapped at the door.

The pale face of Henry Otis looked out. As his eyes fell on the tall, slender, elegant figure of the young lady, even he shrank.

"My daughter is here," the earl said coldly. "She knows all. She wishes to see Mrs. Harman, to hear—if it be possible for Mrs. Harman to speak—confirmation of your story from her lips. I think even you will allow, Mr. Otis, this is no more than her right."

"It is her right," Henry Otis said calmly.

He bowed to the queenly form and lovely face, and held the door wide for her to pass.

"You, too, my lord," he said. "She is dying, but she is conscious, and she has spoken. I must beg," he looked at Lady Cecil, "that you will be very quiet. A moment's excitement would be fatal."

She bowed her head and glided to the bedside. In the dim light of the shaded lamp she looked down upon the dying face. Even to her inexperienced eyes the dread seal of death lay there—the faint breathing was not audible, the eyes were closed—the fingers moved a little, plucking at the sheet. Opposite stood Doctor Graves holding her pulse in one hand—his watch in the other. Lord Ruysland followed and stood beside his daughter. Henry Otis bent over her and spoke.

"Mrs. Harman, Lord Ruysland is here. Can you speak to him?"

The eyelids fluttered—lifted—the great dark eyes looked up out of the rigid face, and fixed at once upon the earl's.

"Harriet," he said, and at the sound of the old name the dying face lit. "You know me, do you not?"

"Yes," very faintly the word came; "my lord, I—know you. I am sorry——" the whisper died away.

He bent close above her.

"Listen, Harriet—speak if you can—tell the truth now. Is Henry Otis' story true? Was it your child—your own—you gave me twenty years ago, or mine?"

"It was mine—I will swear it—if you like. I kept yours. I hated my lady. I swore revenge. She parted

me from Lionel. Lionel! Lionel!" Her face lit again—the old love of her youth came back! The old love! mighty beyond all earthly passion, mighty to break prison-bars, to compass the earth, to cross oceans, to endure in the very throes of death.

Lord Ruysland bent closer and took her hand.

"Look, Harriet," he said; "look at this face beside me. It is the child you gave me—that I love. Tell me again, as God hears and will judge you, is she yours, or mine?"

The dark eyes turned upon the lovely, youthful face. She sank on her knees, and came very near that dying face.

"She is—mine—as God hears and will judge me—mine, Katherine Harman. Yours I gave to Sir John Dangerfield. Her grave is in Castleford churchyard, and I saw her—saw her—two nights ago."

Lord Ruysland looked at Henry Otis.

"She saw Helen Herncastle," Henry Otis answered, with rigidly compressed lips.

"I did you great wrong," the dying lips whispered again—the dying eyes turning once more to the earl. The sight of her child seemed to wake no emotion whatever within her. "I hated my lady—I swore revenge—and I took it. I kept her child. She parted me from Lionel. He loved me—Lionel! Lionel!"

The faintly whispering voice died away—she never spoke again. Lady Cecil's face lay buried in her hands—on the others dead silence fell. The eyes closed, a spasm shook her from head to foot. "Lionel," the lips seemed to form once, then there was a moment's quiet, a strong shiver, and with it the last flicker of the lamp went out. And death stood in the midst of them.

"Come away, my darling," the earl whispered tenderly in Lady Cecil's ear.

Two sightless eyes look up at him, blind with dumb misery—then with a gasp the tension that had held her up so long gave way. She fell back fainting in his arms.

* * * * * * *

The blinds were closed—a solemn hush lay over the house. In the parlor of the Silver Rose two coffins stood on trestles. In one the body of Harriet Harman lay—in

the other, what they had found in the ruins of Bracken Hollow.

It was late in the afternoon of the following day. Over Scarswood Park summer silence and summer beauty reigned. The fish-pond and fountains flashed like jewels in the sunshine-turfy lanes, emerald green; white, pink, and crimson August roses nodded their fragrant heads in the sultry heat. The stone terraces—the great urns were burnished like silver, the leaves of the copper beeches were blood-red rubies, and long lances of light went slanting in amid the waving greenery of fern. The peacock strutted unadmired in the sun, bees boomed, grasshoppers chirped, but no living thing was to be seen around the grand old mansion. Everywhere, within and without, Sabbath silence reigned.

The Earl of Ruysland was alone in the solitude and splendor of the drawing-rooms, his reflection in the many mirrors meeting him at every turn, like a black-robed ghost. He was walking up and down as Lady Cecil had found him last night—the same thoughtful frown on his brow, the same exasperated thought still uppermost.

"Why the deuce couldn't Otis have minded his business and let things alone? From all I have heard of the other one," he resumed, "I was much better off without her. She was neither handsome nor amiable; she was passionate, headstrong, wilful, disobedient. Cecil is none of these things; she has been a creditable daughter from first to last. And they say blood tells. Why need this officious fool, this meddlesome Otis, go raking up the unpleasant truth? The other is dead—it can't benefit her. Cecil is alive, and it will make her wretched all the rest of her life, poor child, and what—what will Sir Arthur say? One consolation is, he is the soul incarnate of honor; he won't draw back, if I know him at all; I believe he will only press his suit the harder. So poor Queenie is provided for in any case. Egad! I didn't know how fond I was of her before! It's a very unpleasant business from first to last, and I could see Otis at the bottom of the bottomless pit with pleasure. It must be hushed up—at any price, it must be hushed up—for my sake, for my late wife's, for poor Queenie's, for Sir Arthur's. The devil take Otis! what was the fool's mo-

tive, I wonder? What—what if that diabolical Miss Herncastle has had something to do with this, too? On my life, she has! Was there ever an infernal piece of mischief let loose on the earth yet without the woman being the instigator? I believe"—he struck his hands together—"it is Miss Herncastle's handiwork from first to last. Well, Soames, what now?"

"The post, my lord—letters for your lordship."

The bowing Soames placed a silver salver, on which half a dozen letters were arranged, before his lordship, and backed from the room.

There were one or two for Lady Cecil—one from Sir Arthur Tregenna—two for Lady Dangerfield, and two for himself. The first of these letters was on business from his solicitor; the other in a hand that was new to him. He broke it open. It was lengthy. He glanced at the name—"Redmond O'Donnell."

"Now, what does O'Donnell mean, by making me wade through twelve closely written pages?" his lordship said in an aggrieved tone. "How little consideration some people have for the feelings of their fellow beings! I'll look over it, at least, I suppose."

He adjusted his eye-glass, smoothed out the pages, and glanced through them. "Miss Herncastle"—"Katherine Dangerfield"—what did it mean? Everywhere those two names!

His lassitude vanished. He began at the beginning, and slowly and carefully read the letter through. His face changed as it had not changed when Otis first broke to him the news that his daughter was not his daughter. Goodness above! what was this? Katherine Dangerfield not dead! Katherine Dangerfield and Miss Herncastle one and the same! Katherine Dangerfield his daughter! Miss Herncastle, whom he had hunted down, whom he had employed a detective to track, whom he had driven from Scarswood like a felon—Katherine Dangerfield and Miss Herncastle one! He turned sick. He laid down the letter—a creeping feeling of faintness upon him—and waited. The soft breeze of the summer's evening blew on his face. A carafe of ice-water stood on a table. He drank a glass, took a turn about the room, sat down suddenly, and read the letter over again.

It was plainly there—all the proofs, one after another; no doubting—no disputing now. She had not died; Otis knew it and had not told him this. He recalled the picture of Lionel Cardanell in the possession of the governess, her interest in the story, the strong likeness to his dead wife that had struck him the first time he saw her. The ghost and the resemblance to Katherine Dangerfield were explained now. A wig and dyed eyebrows were all the disguises she had assumed. What a bold game she had played! And Tregenna had fallen in love with her, and he had separated them—forced him to propose to Harriet Harman's daughter. His daughter lived—had relented at the eleventh hour—had burned the confession—returned Sir Peter his money—renounced her retribution—and gone into the world alone and unaided to fight the bitter battle of life.

For once in his life, cynicism, philosophy, Voltairism fell from the Earl of Ruysland; for once all the creeds of his training and his order were powerless to help him bear this. Had Redmond O'Donnell ever asked for revenge—had he seen him then—even he might have been amply satisfied. He covered his eyes with his hand—struck to the very soul.

"Oh, God!" he cried, "this is the hardest to bear of all!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW IT ENDED.

It was a brilliant April day and all the beautiful country around Scarswood was clothed in living green. Katherine had atoned in great measure for the evil of the past. Her letter to Sir Peter, her humility, her forgiveness had somehow made its way even to his icy heart. The relief of knowing that she was not dead, that the ghost was no ghost, of receiving intact all his money back, was so great that he was ready to do anything for her. She asked but one favor, that he would forgive his wife and take her back. And so a treaty of peace was made, on sundry conditions. The town house

was to be leased, and Scarswood was to be their residence all the year round.

Lord Ruysland had gone abroad, but Cecil was still at Scarswood in the capacity of governess to the twins, in the place of Miss Herncastle, resigned. Lady Dangerfield had consented to this arrangement only on condition that the world should know nothing of it, for, if there was one true, pure, womanly feeling in her worldly, selfish heart it was for Lady Cecil.

There had been a simple wedding in the lovely April weather from the cottage of Henry Otis. Sir Arthur Tregenna and Katherine Dangerfield understood each other at last. There was but one bridesmaid, Lady Cecil Clive. In her white robes, her gossamer veil, her bridal blossoms, and the sweet, tender happiness of her face, Katherine was lovely. Lord Ruysland gave away the bride, and the great Cornish baronet was his son-in-law at last. Immediately after the ceremony, Sir Arthur and Lady Tregenna started for a prolonged continental tour.

Lady Cecil returned to Scarswood to the toil of training and educating the twins. Toil dreary beyond telling, but bravely and cheerfully done. If Redmond O'Donnell's bronzed, somber face, and stern blue eyes, came back to her from over the sea a hundred times a day, his name never once passed her lips.

She sits this April afternoon under the old oak tree sketching, but her hands play listlessly with her pencils. She sits thinking—she is far away in the past—so far that she awakes at last with a start and begins to work. But thought follows her even here. The landscape she would sketch grows blurred before her eyes, and it is a face she draws, a face, every expression, every outline of which is graven on her heart.

"If you intend that for a fancy face, Lady Cecil, I have nothing to say. If for a portrait, then I must tell you it is most egregiously flattered."

She started up with a cry, for it was a likeness of Redmond O'Donnell she was drawing, and it was Redmond O'Donnell himself who stood smiling beside her.

"You do think of me sometimes then, Queenie?"

The old pet name! A faint rose-pink flush deepened all over her fair face.

"I think of all my friends. What an opinion you must have of my memory. I have a private gallery of their portraits, too. Please give me back my sketch. It is easier for you to criticize than to do better."

"A rule which applies to all criticisms, I fancy. I will give you back the sketch on one condition; that I may give you myself with it."

He caught both her hands and held her. The bright blue eyes, full of piercing, laughing light, looked up into the startled brown ones. Not much fierceness—not much sternness there now.

"What do you mean, sir? Let me go. Here come the children—pray, let me go!"

"Let them come!" cries this reckless young Irishman. "Let all the world come, if it likes. I shall not let you go until you promise. You like me excessively—oh! it's no use denying it—you know you do, but not one-thousandth part as I like you. And I want you to marry me. It will not be so very much more stupid than vegetating at Scarswood and teaching the nine parts of speech to Pansy and Pearl. Come, Queenie! We have been in love with each other pretty nearly seven years. They say the certain cure for love is—matrimony. Let us try it."

"Captain O'Donnell, let me go."

"Not until you promise. Queenie, I mean it. I have come all the way from New Orleans to say this. I love you—be my wife. Since you can bear up under the drudgery of a governess' life, you can endure to be the wife of a poor man. The question is—Will you try?"

"I would have tried it six years ago, if Redmond O'Donnell had given me the chance. I would have tried it eight months ago, if his pride had not stood between us. I am not afraid of poverty—perhaps because I was born to it—poverty and servitude were my birthright. Does Captain O'Donnell forget princely blood flows in his veins, and in mine—that of a waiting-maid?"

"That is meant as a reproach. Well, my stiff-neckedness in the past deserves it. But think, Queenie—how you have been brought up—that luxury has been the very breath you drew—think what marriage with a poor man means. Six stuffy rooms—one grimy maid of all work—

one silk dress a year—no carriage—no opera—no society—the beautiful and poetical life a dream of the past. Think!"

"I do think. I think you want to talk me into saying no—you fear I may take you at your word. Very well, sir—I say it. I am deeply honored by your offer, and beg to decline."

He drew her to him—close, closer. If those innocent twins are anywhere in the visible horizon now, they stand strong chance of being amazed and scandalized.

"Queenie, my darling—whom I never hoped to hold, to kiss like this—you really love me well enough to endure poverty and obscurity for my sake? You will be my wife and never repent? You will go with me and resign everything?"

"Everything! Oh, Redmond! I shall have you!"

And then—the twins are drawing nearer; their howls can be heard through the trees, Lady Cecil has some consideration for their artless youth, if *Le Beau Chasseur* has none, and laughing, and blushing, and looking—oh! so lovely—withdraws to the extreme end of the rustic seat.

"No, Captain O'Donnell—not one inch nearer—I insist upon it! My hearing is excellent—any remarks you may have to make I can hear at this distance perfectly well. And the other performance is not necessary. Pearl and Pansy are coming, and you know the proverb—'Little pitchers have great ears.'"

"Confound Pearl and Pansy! Queenie, you are sure you will never repent marrying a penniless soldier of fortune!"

"I tell you I like poverty. How stupid some people are—forcing one to repeat the same thing over and over. I prefer it decidedly—yes, I do—don't look like that—I do."

Captain O'Donnell said gravely: "I am sorry for that. It may be painful for you to hear, Lady Cecil, but—I have had a fortune left me!"

"Redmond!" starting up indignantly. "A fortune!"

"Yes, my love—don't let your angry passions rise if you can help it—a fortune. Monsieur De Lansac died

three months ago, and divided his fortune equally between Rose and me. It was a fortune of two million dollars. A pittance, perhaps, as compared with the inheritance of Sir Arthur Tregenna; but to poverty-loving, humble individuals like Lady Cecil Clive and Redmond O'Donnell, sufficient for the bread and cheese of life, a page in buttons, and two silk dresses per annum. My love! my love!"

Where is the distance between them now—and the twins are standing petrified, open-mouthed and eyed, at what they behold not six yards off.

"I can give you wealth as well as love. Thank God for the happiness He has given me at last!"

The light fades from the scenes and the faces we know—the hour has come to part. One by one they glide into the shadowy distance and are lost to you and me forever. Is any one who has followed their fortunes sorry to let them go, I wonder—to say forever farewell?

Take one last look, before the curtain falls, to rise no more. Of Sir Peter and Lady Dangerfield, dragging out their married, not hated, lives, in the grandeur and dulness of Scarswood. Of Lanty Lafferty, a married man, with "Shusan" for his wife, the prosperous proprietor of a "public." Of Henry Otis and his mother, prosperous in London, with Katherine and his hopeless love already a dream of the past. Of Squire Talbot, who hopes very soon to bring home a mistress to Morecambe—a mistress as yet known as Rose O'Donnell. Of Captain and Lady Cecil O'Donnell, happy beyond all telling of mine—happy in that perfect wedded love rarely found upon earth. And lastly, of Sir Arthur and Lady Tregenna, with the past but a dark, sad dream they never recall, loving each other, trusting each other, as great hearts and noble souls do love and trust. They are still abroad, in pleasant wandering through pleasant lands. One day they will return to Cornwall, and among all the mistresses that in the last four hundred years have ruled it in hoary old Tregenna, none will be more beloved, none more worthy of all love and honor, than she who was once Helen Herncastle. Her face floats before me as I write the words, noble, tender, womanly,

peaceful, and happy at last. Let the name that began this story end it—Katherine.

THE END.

No. 227 of THE SELECT LIBRARY, entitled "The Haunted Husband," by Mrs. Harriet Lewis, is a story of deep mystery and intense interest, and will keep the reader absorbed from the first line to the last.

AB

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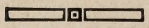

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